

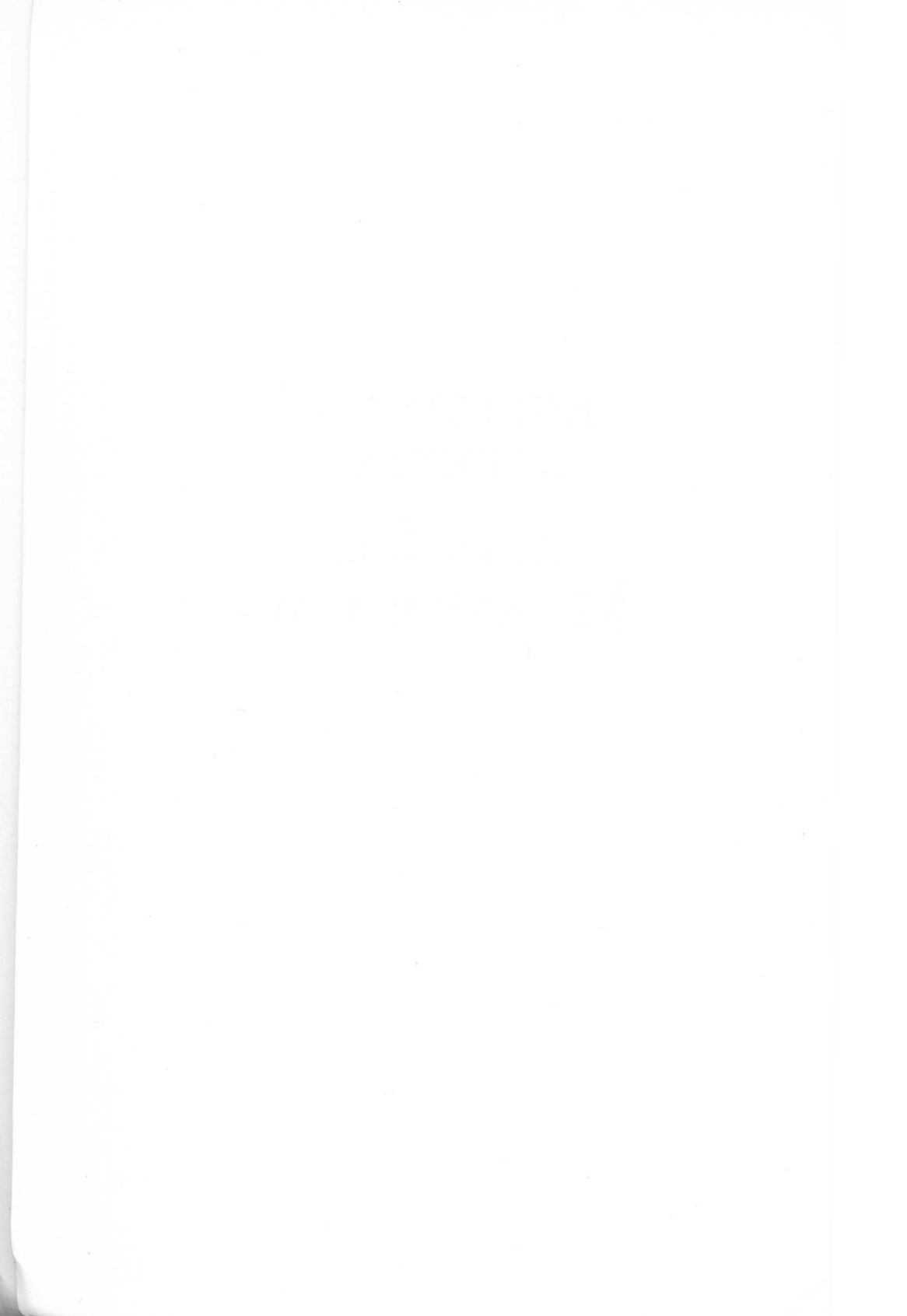
RELIGIOUS
SEEKERS
AND THE
ADVENT OF
MORMONISM



BY DAN VOGEL



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In Memory of My Father

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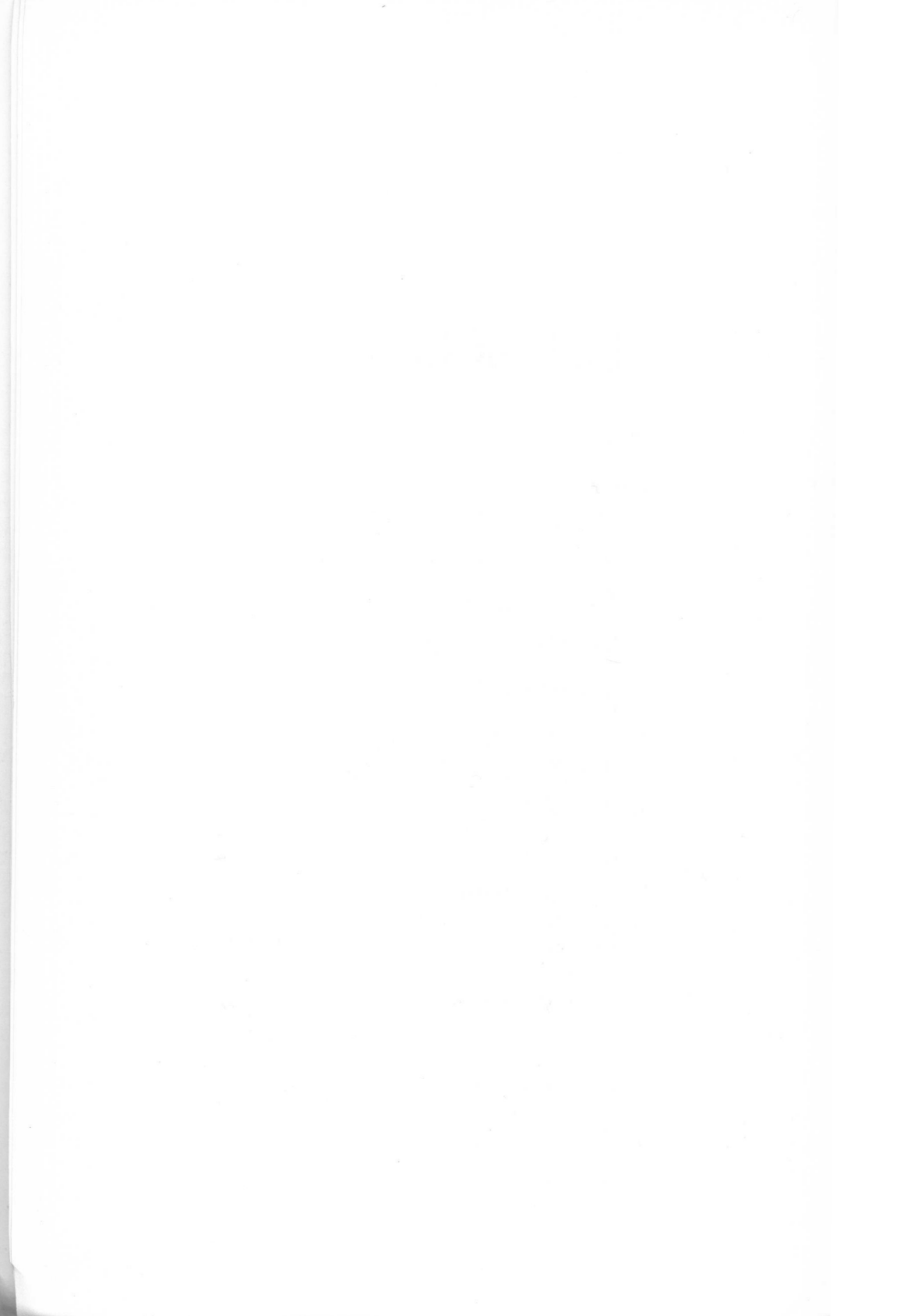
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Preface

Like my previous study of early Mormonism, *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon: Religious Solutions from Columbus to Joseph Smith*, the present analysis involves numerous quotations from sixteenth-, seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century printed and manuscript sources. These follow the originals except in the following instances: typography (such as the long “s,” u for v, i for j, and vv for w) has been modernized, and excessive italics (except when used for emphasis) have been omitted. “Sic” and editorial brackets are used infrequently to clarify particularly confusing or distracting areas. Otherwise, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling are reproduced exactly as they occur in the primary sources.

Again, my debt of gratitude to American and British libraries and institutions is so heavy that I can offer appreciation only in a general way. I would especially like to thank the librarians at the California State University at Long Beach for their courteous and prompt assistance in securing books and materials through interlibrary loan. I have also made extensive use of the library’s facilities, especially its microfiche, microfilm, and microtext collections. The librarians at Brown University were especially helpful in locating important items during my research. I would also like to thank the Library of Congress, the historical department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah, the archives of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Independence, Missouri, the British Museum, and the American Antiquarian Society.

My presentation of what follows has greatly benefited from the kind advice and suggestions of the following persons: Thomas G. Alexander, Lavina Fielding Anderson, Ian G. Barber, H. Michael Marquardt, D. Michael Quinn, and Wesley P. Walters. I

PREFACE

am also indebted to Grant Underwood's and Marvin Hill's separate critiques of preliminary analysis of "Religious Seekers and the Development of the Mormon Concept of Authority," which summarized the ideas presented in this book. In addition, my discussion of Mormon priesthood restoration has benefited from numerous conversations with Brent Lee Metcalfe. While I very much appreciate their contributions, I alone am responsible for errors of fact or interpretation.

My thanks also go to the staff of Signature Books for their continued support and encouragement: George D. Smith, Gary J. Bergera, Ron Priddis, Susan Staker, Connie Disney, Jani Fleet, and Brent Corcoran.

Finally, I would like to thank my mother, Jackie Vogel, without whose support this book would not have been possible.

Introduction

“If the people of this generation harden not their hearts,” the resurrected Jesus Christ told Mormon church founder Joseph Smith in March 1829, “I will establish my church, like unto the church which was taught by my disciples in the days of old.”¹ The following year, on 6 April, Smith’s Church of Christ became “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” (D&C 1:30). Four years later Jason Whitman, the general secretary of the American Unitarian Association, wrote that the Mormons were fond of comparing their beliefs to those which existed in the “primitive ages of the church.”² Ezra Booth, an early Mormon apostate, admitted in 1831 that the Mormon “system, to some, carries the face of plausibility, and appears under an imposing form. It claims the Bible for its patron and proffers the restoration of the apostolic church, with all the gifts and graces with which the primitive saints were endowed.”³

The idea that existing churches were corruptions of the ancient or primitive church was not new to early America. Nor was there a shortage of those attempting to restore the ancient order. The famous Reformed Baptist preacher and founder of the Disciples of Christ, Alexander Campbell, believed that Mormonism was a satanic imitation of his own “primitive gospel” movement.⁴ J. J. Moss, a Campbellite who observed the growth of Mormonism in Ohio, believed that Joseph Smith “stole (not all but the best part) of his thunder from the Disciples by taking their plea for the restoration of primitive Christianity & if the Disciples could be successful in bringing the people back to the old Apostolic doctrine of faith[,] repentance & baptism for the conversion of sinners so could the Mormons.”⁵

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Campbellites recognized important differences between their version of Primitivism and that of the Mormons. Campbell himself charged Joseph Smith with bringing together in the Book of Mormon "every error and almost every truth discussed in New York for the last ten years."⁶ Campbell used the term "truth" because he recognized in the Book of Mormon narrative of ancient American Christianity some of the same Primitivistic elements for which he was well known. "Error" referred to his rejection of the book's radical notion of the true church and religious authority.

In his 1968 dissertation, "The Role of Christian Primitivism in the Origin and Development of the Mormon Kingdom, 1830-1844," Marvin S. Hill explored Joseph Smith's and his associates' attempt to restore Christianity to its primitive or ancient condition. According to Hill, the Book of Mormon was not only "an advocate of primitive gospel faith," but this constituted "the major theme of the work."⁷ Where earlier students had noticed only scattered cultural influences, Hill attempted to put the pieces together to reveal the larger picture.

Hill's findings can be brought into even sharper focus by looking at individuals within the larger primitive gospel movement whose Primitivism was of a special variety. These individuals, usually referred to as "Seekers" or "Waiters," anticipated new apostles who would be divinely commissioned to "restore" the true Christian worship. Seekers shared with Primitivists the belief that there had been an "apostasy" from an original church established by Jesus and that a "restoration" was necessary. But Seekers differed on matters of authority and restoration. They disagreed with Campbell and others that the Bible provided all necessary authority to establish a church. Seekers believed that ordinances would be inefficacious until there was a new, literal, and evident dispensation of divine power.

In discussing Primitivism, Hill mentioned the "somewhat similar response" of New York Seekers Asa Wild and Erastus Hanchett but did not explain how they differed from Primitivists generally. Nor did Hill distinguish between the Primitivism of Joseph Smith's mother, Lucy Mack, and the Seekerism of his father, Joseph Sr., so apparent during the Palmyra revival of 1824-25, or between other early Mormon converts.⁸

Peter Crawley, in "The Passage of Mormon Primitivism," followed Hill by referring to early Mormonism as "a loosely organized, anti-creedal group of 'seekers.'"⁹ However, Crowley's discussion applied more to the liberal versions of Primitivism, such as Campbell's Disciples of Christ. Crowley used the term "seekers" to describe early Mormonism without describing what Seekers believed or how they differed from others in the primitive gospel movement.

Historian Jan Shipps also did not distinguish between Seekers and other Primitivists. In *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*, she observed that "the Smiths were a part of a heterogeneous assemblage of Christian 'seekers' who were believers of a very special kind." Her description of Seekerism focused only on the Seeker rejection of organized religion, not their radical concept of authority and restoration. Unfortunately, Shipps echoed Crawley that there was a "crucial difference" between the restoration claims of early Mormonism and other Christian Primitivists and did not note that early Mormonism's radical authority and restoration claims followed Seeker expectations.¹⁰ Her suggestion that Mormonism represents a new religious tradition may therefore require qualification.

Other scholars have used the term "Seeker" with similar imprecision, and a detailed investigation of the beliefs and history of religious Seekerism and its possible influence on early Mormonism has long been needed.¹¹ The purpose of this study is to illuminate more fully nineteenth-century Seekerism as a facet of Primitivism, to explore the implications of Seeker beliefs possibly held by Mormon founders and converts, and to suggest the waning of charismatic Seeker influence as Mormonism developed a more bureaucratized hierarchy.

In discussing Seekerism and the primitive gospel movement, I have found it convenient to refer to those holding either liberal or conservative versions of Christian Primitivism simply as Primitivists. My discussion compares the radical version of Primitivism held by the Seekers with the liberal and conservative versions held by other Primitivists. Although Seekers rarely used the term to describe themselves, scholars generally use the term "Seeker" to refer to members of the Seeker sect of seventeenth-century England and to individuals and groups coming before and following the English Seekers of that period. I follow this practice by using the term Seeker to describe those adopting various versions of Seekerism. That the term "Seeker" was employed

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in Joseph Smith's day is indicated by Lucy Smith's use of it to describe the beliefs of her brother Jason Mack, who, at age sixteen, "became what was then called a *Seeker*."¹²

I have organized the book in the following manner. Chapter 1 introduces readers to Seekerism and its connection with Christian Primitivism. Chapter 2 explores Joseph Smith's pre-Mormon Seeker tendencies and describes possible Seeker influences on early Mormonism. Chapter 3 discusses differing views of Christian apostasy and emphasizes the similarity of Seeker and Mormon claims. Chapter 4 discusses the Primitivist reaction to the various churches—especially to their creeds and professional clergy—and suggests that the Mormon position is best understood in a Seeker context. Chapter 5 examines Primitivist attempts at restoration and explores the concept of the restoration of authority claimed by Seekers and Mormons. Chapter 6 describes the type of church to be restored and argues that the early Mormon concept of a theocratic church government followed Seeker expectations. Chapter 7 describes some of the leading doctrines of early Mormonism within the context of the Seeker-Primitivist debate. Finally, chapter 8 discusses varying nineteenth-century views about the Millennium and indicates that Mormons and Seekers held similar views.

— NOTES —

1. *A Book of Commandments, for the Government of the Church of Christ* (Zion [Independence, MO]: W. W. Phelps, 1833), 4:5. This verse was deleted from the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

2. Jason Whitman, "The Book of Mormon," *The Unitarian* (1 Jan. 1834): 46.

3. In E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled [sic]: or, A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, from Its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, OH: E. D. Howe, 1834), 179–80.

4. Alexander Campbell, "The Mormonites," *Millennial Harbinger* 2 (Feb. 1831): 93, and "The Book of Mormon Reviewed and Its Divine Pretensions Exposed," *Painesville Telegraph* (15 March 1831): 1–2. The term "primitive gospel" is used by Robert Frederick West to characterize Campbell's movement and is useful in describing the movement in general. See *Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), vii–viii.

5. J. J. Moss to J. T. Cobb, 17 Dec. 1878, in A. T. Schroeder Collection, Wisconsin State Historical Society.

6. *Millennial Harbinger* 2 (Feb. 1831): 93.

7. Marvin S. Hill, "The Role of Christian Primitivism in the Origin and Development of the Mormon Kingdom, 1830-1844," Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1968, 104, 101, 102.

8. Ibid., 44-45, 49-51, 56-60. Hill subsequently recognized the tension existing between Lucy and Joseph Smith. See "A Note on Joseph Smith's First Vision and Its Import in the Shaping of Early Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 12 (Spring 1979): 90-99. However, Hill described the tension as a clash between pietism and rationalism and did not explore the differences between Primitivism and Seekerism. In my opinion, he also incorrectly identified Lucy as a Seeker.

9. Peter Crawley, "The Passage of Mormon Primitivism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 13 (Winter 1980): 27.

10. Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 6, 119-20; also 34-35, 68, 78-79.

11. For example, Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 4, write that the Smith family in 1816 was "unchurched yet spiritually inclined and the inheritors of a mild 'seeker' tradition." Richard L. Bushman, in *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 38, incorrectly says Lucy Smith was a "seeker." An exception might be Gary W. Ellsworth, "Seventeenth-Century Seekers Wait for the Restoration," *Ensign* 10 (Oct. 1980): 57. While Ellsworth recognized that Seekers anticipated a restoration, he made no attempt to examine Seeker beliefs in detail. Moreover, he viewed Seekerism only as a seventeenth-century movement and missed its possible influence on Mormonism.

12. Lucy [Mack] Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations* (Liverpool: S. W. Richards, 1853), 21.



THE Seeker Movement

In an 1831 letter to her brother Solomon, Lucy Mack Smith, mother of the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, wrote that one purpose of her son's recently published Book of Mormon was to show the apostate condition of the Christian church. Thanks to the new scripture, she declared, "we can see the situation in which the world now stands; that the eyes of the whole world are blinded; that the churches have all become corrupted, yea every church upon the face of the earth; that the Gospel of Christ is nowhere preached." But the world was not left in this apostate condition, Lucy continued: "God, seeing our situation, had compassion upon us, and has sent us this revelation that the stumbling block might be removed, that whosoever would might enter. He now established His Church upon the earth as it was in the days of the Apostles. He has now made a new and everlasting covenant."¹

Like his mother, Joseph Smith also emphasized Mormonism's restorationist nature. Thomas Bullock, who took notes of Smith's Nauvoo, Illinois, sermons, recorded the following from a 16 June 1844 address, given only days before Smith's untimely death:

[The] old Catholic Church is worth more than all [the Protestants]—here is a princ[iple]. of logic—that men have no more sense—I will illustrate an old apple tree—here jumps off a branch & says I am the true tree. & you are corrupt—if the whole tree is corrupt how can any true thing come out of it—the char[acte]r of the old ones have always been sland[ere]d. by all apos[tates] since the world began—I testify again as God never will acknowledge any apost[ate]: any man who will betray the Catholics will betray you . . . all men are liars who say that they are of the true [tree]—God always sent a new dispensat[io]n. into the world—when men come out & build upon o[the]r men's foundat[io]n.—did I build on anot[he]r

mans found[a]t[io]n. but my own—I have got all the truth & an indepen[den]t. rev[elatio]n. in the bargain—& God will bear me off triumphant.²

Here, Smith distinguished between his own work as a restorer and that of the Reformers. The Seekers, who awaited a divinely revealed restoration rather than a reformation through human ingenuity, made the same distinction.

Seekerism existed at the radical end of the Reformation spectrum. Scholars have generally emphasized “the primitive gospel movement” in ante-bellum America, but diverse versions of Christian primitivism already existed in post-Reformation Europe and in England after Henry VIII severed the English churches from the papacy. Justification for reform was usually couched in Primitivistic rhetoric, accusing the Roman church of corrupting the pure gospel, for example. Thus Seekerism—whether in Europe, England, or America—existed within a larger primitive gospel movement.³

Although the Primitivist movement began in Europe and England, it flourished in the freer environment of post-Revolutionary America. At first widely scattered, by 1850 the American Primitivists had produced two sects with significant followings: the Disciples of Christ and the Mormons.⁴ However, these two groups shared competing approaches to the problem of the perceived apostasy from primitive Christianity.

In Europe and England tension existed between conservative, liberal, and radical versions of Christian Primitivism. Debate usually centered on how strictly the Christian church should adhere to the Bible or follow tradition in matters of church practice. Before Primitivism was transplanted to America, the conservative version held sway. As Sidney Mead observed, the Reformation took shape in “right-wing” Lutheran, Anglican, and Reformed versions, which “held the doctrine of the Word together with doctrines of the Church and Ministry in such fashion as to guard against individual ‘enthusiasm’ and to preserve the sense of the unbroken historical continuity of Christianity.”⁵

Those in Europe and England who held more radical views—such as Anabaptists, Seekers, Familiests (those in “The Family of Love”), Ranters, and Quakers—were entirely overshadowed by the state churches. The leading Reformers—Luther, Zwingli, and

Calvin—attacked the views of the Anabaptists (literally “rebaptizer”), who repudiated infant baptism and Calvinistic predestination, and believed in new revelations, the imminent appearance of Christ, and the establishment of the New Jerusalem.⁶

The use of Primitivist theology by one Church of England divine demonstrates how those in the “right-wing” incorporated radical tenets. When Charles II married the Portuguese princess, Catherine of Braganza, for political purposes, English churchmen were outraged by the alliance with a Catholic nation. In 1662 Charles’s chaplain, Thomas Pierce, delivered a sermon before the king in which he defended the Protestant church and attacked Catholicism as a corruption of primitive Christianity. “We cannot better put them to shame and silence,” Pierce argued, “then [sic] by demonstrating the Novelty and base extraction of their Pretensions, whilst we evince at the same instant the Sacred Antiquity of our own. . . . When they obtrude their Revelations, or teach for Doctrines of God the meer commandments of Men,” he continued, “we must ask them every one, how they read in the beginning.”⁷ Among the corruptions listed by Pierce were celibacy, denial of divorce, transubstantiation, and withholding the Bible from parishioners.⁸

Pierce elaborated on the claim of biblical authority over tradition:

The Popish Writers . . . ever complain we have left their Church; but never shew us that Iota as to which we have left the Word of God, or the Apostles, or the yet uncorrupted and primitive Church, or the Four first General Councils. We are so zealous for Antiquity, (provided it be but antique enough) that we never have despised a meer tradition, which we could track by sure footsteps from as far as the times of the purest Christians. But this is still their childish fallacie.⁹

Pierce did not attack Catholic novelties *per se*. Corruptions “alone cannot justifie a Peoples’ Separation from any Church,” he argued. Separation is only justified when the novelties are “reputed as things without which there is no Salvation” or “obtruded upon the People amongst the Articles of their Faith.”¹⁰ The Anglican chaplain emphasized this distinction because his church had retained many Catholic innovations.

In the latter half of the sixteenth century, the Puritan movement began to call for reform within the Church of England. Puritans believed the Antichrist had corrupted the church but not completely destroyed it, and they sought to “purify” the church by

eliminating all Catholic doctrines and practices. They eventually came to see themselves as “a church within a church.” Thomas Cartwright (1535–1603), a leading Puritan, argued that the true church fell when it abandoned the divinely commanded presbyterian form of government for one based on human invention. Even the ceremonies of the Church of England, Cartwright charged, were an offense to conscience because of their origin in Catholic ritual and by association with papist understanding of theological concepts such as grace.¹¹

For the most part, Church of England clerics opposed such dependence on the Bible. Richard Hooker (1553/4–1600) argued in his work *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* that the church was not slavishly bound to the primitive form. While bound by scripture in matters of doctrine and salvation, the church was free to evolve in matters of church government.¹²

When their goal to transform the Church of England was frustrated, some Puritans formed their own “Separatist” congregations. These Separatist Puritans were eventually driven from England to Holland. However, those who carried the Puritan vision to the shores of New England in 1620 were nonseparating Puritans who had little tolerance for Separatist dissenters.¹³

The Puritans came to the New World to build a society established on gospel principles, which they felt would become an “ensign to the nations.” In America, they believed, they could better attain the salvation of their souls, since they would be free from the medieval shackles of the Anglican Church, still close to Rome, which mixed saints and sinners in its communion. They soon boasted with John Cotton that the churches which they had formed in New England were very close to what would have been set up “if the Lord Jesus were here himself in person.”¹⁴

The Puritans did not cross over to America to evolve new creeds and forms but rather to protect and maintain those already conceived. The leaders of New England’s first generation—William Bradford, John Winthrop, Francis Daniel Pastorius—turned their energies to safeguarding their new, autonomous religious societies. However, the Puritan model society in the wilderness soon began to evaporate in the heat of religious controversy. Puritan hegemony was threatened by such heretics and schismatics as the Antinomians, who set grace above law; the Arminians (followers of Dutch reformer Jacobus Arminius), who set piety above grace; and the Quakers, who placed personal revelation above scripture. Just as the Puritans had sought to purify the Church of

England, so others in New England sought to purify the Puritans. As early as 1679, a formal synod met in Boston under the leadership of Increase Mather to declare that one of the reasons New England had suffered was because of "contention" in the churches.¹⁵

An intolerant spirit took hold as the Puritan leaders tried to maintain control. Various dissenters, such as Roger Williams, Anne Hutchinson and other "Antinomians," the Gortonists, Quakers, Baptists, and "Anabaptists" were either banished from the Puritan community or openly persecuted.¹⁶

The economic success of New England in the mid-seventeenth century was accompanied by the second generation's neglect of spiritual matters.¹⁷ By the end of the century Puritanism was in full decline. The death blow came in the mid-eighteenth century, when religious revivalism on one side and Arminian rationalism on the other choked off what little life remained. Historians Alan Heimert and Perry Miller have characterized the Great Awakening of the 1740s—largely inspired by the preaching of the "moderate" Calvinist Jonathan Edwards—as "the dying shudder of a Puritanism that refused to see itself as an anachronism."¹⁸

The transition from state religion to pluralism was difficult to make for those who came to North America to create a society which would be an example for English Puritans. Many of the religiously conservative would later criticize the federal constitution's separation of church and state as a ploy of the devil.¹⁹ However, by 1800 most states had dissolved their religious establishments, opening the way for intense competition as each denomination vied for membership. Organized efforts at persuading the unchurched to come to Christ included revivalistic camp meetings and missionary societies. Such efforts were aimed particularly at the west. This period of transition from "coercion to persuasion," as Sidney Mead phrased it, also witnessed increasing prominence for the primitive gospel movement.²⁰

Kenneth Scott Latourette in his monumental *History of the Expansion of Christianity* describes the environmental factors helping to make liberal Primitive Christianity the "dominant" religious tendency of post-Revolutionary American Protestantism. Liberal Primitivism had existed among the more extreme Protestant groups in Europe, but in nineteenth-century America such groups were free to grow without organized opposition. In the United States, Old World institutions were suspect. In this

unfettered environment, liberal versions of Christian Primitivism flourished. Never had there been such a large body of Christians, Latourette argues, that were "more nearly divorced from what in the broad sense could be called Catholic Christianity."²¹

The primitive gospel movement²² emerged first among the "common" folk of New England, the South, and West between the years 1790 and 1830. The "rural, socially harmonious village community with its dominant religious orientation, which its leaders had known in New England," had generally disintegrated, while a "commercially oriented, acquisitive, openly pluralistic and competitive, and implicitly secular social and religious order" triumphed.²³ Responding to this crisis, Unitarian Joseph Priestley dedicated his 1793 *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* to "the friends of pure christianity" and promised his readers, "our religion will, in due time, purge itself of everything that debases it."²⁴ Priestley felt that the disparate groups could find agreement if they upheld "*no creed but the Bible*."²⁵ An increased emphasis on biblical patterns would lead to a greater unity of faith.

In his short history of the primitive gospel movement, the Reverend David Millard wrote:

Within about one half century, a very considerable body of religionists have arisen in the United States, who, rejecting all names, appellations, and badges of distinctive party among the followers of Christ, simply call themselves CHRISTIANS. Sometimes, in speaking of themselves as a body, they use the term *Christian Connexion*. In many parts of our country this people have become numerous. . . . They rose nearly simultaneously in different sections of our country, remote from each other, without any preconceived plan, or even knowledge of each other's movements.²⁶

The leaders of the three branches of this movement, according to Millard, were Abner Jones of Vermont, James O'Kelly of Virginia, and Barton W. Stone of Kentucky.

Abner Jones was one of the first to preach against Calvinism in New England. He originally wanted to become a Baptist preacher, but, finding he could not accept the doctrine of election and other tenets, he withdrew from them, announcing "his determination to stand alone, and acknowledge the authority of no church or set of men."²⁷ In 1801, Jones headed a group in Lyndon, Vermont, determined to make a church "by the name of CHRISTIANS only."²⁸ In 1802 he established a second church at Bradford, Vermont, and a third at Piermont, New Hampshire,

the following year.²⁹ Jones influenced Elias Smith of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, a Baptist minister who also doubted the doctrine of election. By 1803 Smith had separated from the Calvinistic Baptists to start "The Christian Connexion."³⁰ Through the efforts of Jones and other Baptist preachers, Millard reports, "churches of the order were soon planted in all the New England states, the states of New York, Pennsylvania, [and] Ohio."³¹

In southern Virginia the Primitivistic movement began among latitudinarian Methodists frustrated by authoritarian leadership. Following revivals in the region in 1787 and 1788, a group of Methodists headed by Irish-born minister James O'Kelly separated from the main body, called themselves "Christian," and resolved to have "no creed or discipline but the Bible."³² O'Kelly's group proved to have nationwide influence.

Yet another primitive gospel movement began under former Presbyterian Barton W. Stone. His separation came during the revivals at Cane Ridge, Kentucky (1800-1801). The emotional conversions at the camp meetings caused him to question further his own doubts about Calvinistic election. Although he enjoyed the spirit of unity at the revivals, he dreaded the conflict over doctrine occurring in their wake. Stone and other dissenters withdrew from the Kentucky Synod to form a new presbytery, but in 1804 they dissolved the "Springfield Presbytery" and called themselves "Christians."³³ Stone's group renounced infant baptism and practiced baptism by immersion.³⁴ Stone preached for twenty-five years and later joined Alexander Campbell's movement.³⁵

Millard emphasized the diversity of these three groups of the "Christian Connexion." The principal leaders of the movement, he pointed out, "originated from the three principal Protestant sects in America. The branch at the south from the Methodists, the one at the north from the Baptists, and the one at the west from the Presbyterians. The three branches rose within the space of eight years, in sections remote and unknown to each other, until some years afterwards. Probably no other religious body ever had a similar origin."³⁶

Irishman Alexander Campbell, schooled in the primitive gospel in Scotland,³⁷ followed his father, a minister in a seceder branch of the Presbyterian church in Ireland, to western Pennsylvania in 1809. The elder Campbell withdrew from the orthodox Presbyterians in Pennsylvania after being found guilty of violating the closed communion principle. In 1809 the Campbells formed The Christian Association of Washington, which became a church in

1811. The institution of baptism by immersion soon led to union with the Baptists in the Redstone Association.³⁸

By 1830 Alexander Campbell had broken completely from the Presbyterians to form a new religious denomination, the Disciples of Christ, a model primitive gospel movement.³⁹ That same year Campbell began publishing a new religious journal, the *Millennial Harbinger*, which he and others filled with expressions of hope that the spread of Christian unity would usher in the great Millennium.

Many who believed that there had been an apostasy from primitive Christianity remained within the traditional denominational churches, convinced that the corruptions were not sufficient for separation. These persons advocated a more conservative reform, as opposed to the liberal reform sought by Jones, O'Kelly, Stone, and Campbell. Others, on the fringe of American society, often referred to as Seekers,⁴⁰ looked for an even more "radical" restoration. Seekers suspended the performance of ordinances until the time when God would restore authority to perform them. Seekers therefore withdrew from organized Christian denominations and impatiently awaited a new revelation.

In its most narrow meaning, "Seeker" refers to a small, "radical" sect which arose out of the mystical and spiritual elements in Puritanism⁴¹ and, more or less, associated with the Independents⁴² in mid-seventeenth-century England. "Seekerism" more broadly refers to a movement or tendency beginning with Luther, momentarily culminating with the Seeker Sect in the Commonwealth (1649–53), and persisting afterwards in the beliefs of various individuals and groups. It is from descriptions of English Seekers that one finds the most detailed information about Seeker philosophy, however.

Seekerism in England developed slowly after the ecclesiastical ferment of the 1590s. Among the early advocates of Seekerism were brothers Walter, Thomas, and Bartholomew Legate, and John Wilkinson (d. ca. 1620) and Edward Wightman. Both Edward Wightman and Bartholomew Legate were burned at the stake in 1611 for heresy.⁴³ Seekerism began to flourish during the ecclesiastical and spiritual turmoil of the 1640s and expanded rapidly during the Civil Wars (1642–48) in the northern counties of Yorkshire, Westmoreland, and Lancashire, and in the west in Bristol and even London. It reached its peak in the English Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell, who remained uncommitted to any particular sect but exhibited some Seeker sympathy.⁴⁴ The

Seeker sect grew to such proportions that by 1646 army chaplain John Saltmarsh apparently considered it the fourth most important sect in England. Presbyterian Thomas Edwards feared that he would see all other sects "swallowed up in the Seekers."⁴⁵

English Seekers were spiritual heirs of the sixteenth-century "spiritual reformers" on the Continent. Hans Denck, Sebastian Franck, Kasper Schwenckfeld, Sebastian Castellio, and Dirch Coornhertz were some of the important leaders of radical reform on the Continent.⁴⁶ The writings of Coornhertz inspired the Seeker attitude of the Amsterdam-based Collegiant (i.e. "gathering") movement in seventeenth-century Holland.⁴⁷ Many Continental Seekers followed Coornhertz in the belief that the visible church was only temporary and the saints should wait for the true apostolic church, a purely inward church, to be divinely commissioned.⁴⁸

As early as 1560 John Knox found it necessary to refute a book written by Sebastian Castellio.⁴⁹ Even during the reign of Elizabeth the ideas of the radical reformers were already drifting across the channel into England. During the reign of James I (1603–25), John Everard, a Cambridge scholar who preached a curious blend of Seekerism and spiritual alchemy, translated into English selected works of Denck, Franck, and Castellio.⁵⁰ It was during the period of Everard's preaching that Seekerism as a movement was born in England. Everard, together with Roger Brierly (or Breirly), a minister at Grindelton, John Webster of Clitheroe, an ordained priest, and John Saltmarsh, rector of Heslerton in Yorkshire and an Antinomian with Seeker leanings and eventually one of Cromwell's army chaplains, were the "fathers" of English Seekerism. But actual communities of Seekers did not form until later.

Robert Bayllie, a Scots Presbyterian, described the English Seekers in 1647:

Very many of the Anabaptists are now turned Seekers, denying the truth of any Church upon earth for many ages past, denying that there are any pastors now on the earth, that there may be any preaching of the word, any joining in prayer, any celebration either of Baptism or of the Lord's supper, any church discipline at all, or any church Act, church state, or church ordinance whatsoever; while God from heaven send new apostles to work miracles and set up churches, which for the space of fourteen hundred years at least have totally failed in the whole world.⁵¹

There were basically two types of Seekers.⁵² The first followed in a direct line from the radical reformers of Europe and conceived the restoration, the church, the ordinances, the Second Coming, and the millennial kingdom as spiritual notions. These *spiritualistic Seekers*⁵³ needed no physical church or ordinances but sought a restoration of God's spirit and power among the true believers. William Allen, a General Baptist, described this type of Seeker in his 1655 book *A Doubt Resolved, or Satisfaction for the Seekers*:

There are too many in these times, who to render waterbaptism [sic] unnecessary, do construe most of these Scriptures [which speak of baptism] as meant of the Baptism of the Spirit . . . who do interpret those words, 1 Cor[inthians] 12. 13. *By one spirit we are all baptized into one body* to be meant of the baptism of the spirit; and so do take themselves as having the spirit, to be duly incorporated visibly into this one body of Christ which is his church, by virtue of their being baptized with the spirit, whether they have ever received water-baptism or no.⁵⁴

The second type of Seeker waited for the reestablishment of the visible church, the return of authority to perform the ordinances, and the Coming of Christ to destroy the ungodly and establish the political kingdom of God. These *literalistic Seekers*⁵⁵ also awaited the restoration of apostolic authority, though they were unsure about its exact nature or precisely how it would be returned. William Allen also described this type of Seeker:

They make a considerable obstacle in their way of coming into Church-communion, Gospel ordinances, *viz.*, the want of a right administrator: For they suppose that since that general apostasy, from the purity of faith and Gospel order, which befel the Churches, upon the entering of the Papacie into the world, there hath none appeared sufficiently Authorized by God, to rally again what had been routed by [the] hand of the enemy, or to gather Churches, or [to] administer Ordinances; all due Administrators in this kind, being perished from the earth: and that therefore we must be content to wait till God shall raise up some such, whose authority in this behalf he shall attest with visible signs of his presence, by gifts of the Holy Ghost; and divers miracles as at the first erection of Gospel Churches and ordinances.⁵⁶

John Saltmarsh also mentioned such Seekers:

They wait, in this time of the apostasy of the Christian

churches, as the Jews did in the time of their apostasy, and as the apostles and disciples at Jerusalem, till they were endued with power from on high, finding no practice for worship, but according to the first pattern. . . . They wait for a restoration of all things and a setting up [of] all gospel officers, churches, ordinances, according to the pattern in the New Testament. They wait for an apostle or angel, that is some with a visible glory and power able, in the Spirit, to give visible demonstration of their sending.⁵⁷

These two positions described by Allen had Continental antecedents extending back to Luther's day. Sebastian Franck reported in 1536 that "some desire to allow Baptism and other ceremonies to remain in abeyance till God gives another command" and "sends out true labourers into His harvest." "Some others agree," Franck continued, that "the ceremonies since the death of the apostles are equally defiled, laid waste and fallen" but differ in their belief that "God no longer heeds them and does not desire that they should be longer kept, on which account they will never again be set up, but Christians are now to proceed entirely in the Spirit and in Truth and never in an outward manner."⁵⁸ These spiritualistic and literalistic positions appear and reappear in the Seeker movement.

By the beginning of the English Civil War in 1642, societies of Seekers had begun forming. In 1652 many of these Seekers were absorbed by George Fox's Society of Friends. It is from early Quaker documents that much of the understanding about early Seeker communities comes.⁵⁹

In his Preface to Fox's *Great Mystery of the Great Whore Unfolded* (1659), Edward Burrough described the religious experience of many early Quakers, including himself, before their conversion:

We went through and tried all sorts of teachers, and ran from mountain to mountain, and from man to man, and from one form to another, as many do to this day, who yet remain *ungathered* to the Lord. . . .

[Then] we ceased from the teachings of all men, and their words, and their worships, and their Temples, and all their baptisms, and Churches, and we ceased from our own words, and professions, and practices in Religion . . . and by this Light of Christ in us were we led out of all false waies and false preachings, and false Ministers, and we met together often, and waited upon the Lord in pure silence, from our own words, and all men's words, and harkened to the voice

of the Lord, and felt his word in our hearts, to burn up and beat down all that was contrary to God.⁶⁰

Many early Quakers had left Puritanism in search of a living church, wandering from one church to another until they found the Society of Friends. Such was the experience of Isaac and Mary Penington of London, Charles Marshall of Bristol, Francis Howgill, John Camm, John Audland, and George Fox himself. "As I grew in years," wrote Charles Marshall, "I grew more and more dissatisfied with lifeless empty Professions and [religious] Professors . . . and feeling that I could not find the living among the Dead . . . I spent much time in retirement in the Fields and Woods."⁶¹ Marshall gradually fell in with the Seekers and remained in their ranks until his conversion to Quakerism.

George Fox had been a spiritual pilgrim from 1643 to 1648: "But as I had forsaken the Priests, so I left the Separate Preachers also, and those called the Most-Experienced People: For I saw, there was none among them all, that could speak to my Condition." In 1646 Fox concluded that only those receiving spiritual rebirth were true believers. Two years later he had a vision in which he was told to call people out of spiritual Babylon to the Inner Light by bringing

People off from their own ways, to Christ . . . from their Churches (which Men had made and gathered) to the Church in God . . . and off from all the Worlds Worshipps, to know the Spirit of Truth in the inward Parts. . . . I was to bring them off from all the World's Fellowships, and Prayings and Singings, which stood in Forms without Power . . . that they might Pray in the Holy Ghost, and Sing in the Spirit. . . . I was to bring People off from Jewish Ceremonies, and from Heathenish Fables . . . and all their beggarly Rudiments, with their Schools and Colledges [sic], for making Ministers of Christ . . . and [from] all their Images and Crosses, and Sprinkling of Infants.⁶²

Fox was drawn north to Pendle Hill where he had a vision of people dressed in white by the river's side coming to Jesus. In the town of Sedbergh, in the northwest corner of Yorkshire, he found a community of Seekers, "a prepared people, waiting to be gathered." Beginning with the conversion of the Sedbergh Seekers, the Quaker gospel spread to other areas in the north. Whole groups of Seekers in Yorkshire, Westmoreland, and Lancashire were gathered into the Quaker movement within two years. In the spring of 1652 Fox visited Ulverston in Furness, where

Margaret and Thomas Fell of Swarthmore Hall and many other Seekers were converted. These conversions would prove important to the Quaker cause, for Swarthmore Hall eventually became the unofficial center of the missionary movement. Yet there were many, both in England and in America, who did not become Finders with Fox but remained Seekers.⁶³

The Quakers also found a "prepared people" in the American colonies for their gospel of the Inner Light. Seeker influence seems to have been felt in several areas in the Plymouth colony, including Lynn and Salem, in the Rhode Island towns of Newport and Providence, and in the Long Island towns of Flushing, Gravesend, Jamaica, Hempstead, and Oyster.⁶⁴

As early as 1641, fifteen years before the arrival of the Quakers, several religious groups in Newport, Rhode Island, were expressing views which one historian found "extraordinarily akin to those later held by the Society of Friends."⁶⁵ In 1641 Jonathan Winthrop described the Seeker attitude of some of the leading inhabitants of Newport, stating that they "maintained that there were no churches since those founded by the apostles and evangelists, nor could any be, nor any pastors ordained, nor seals administered but by such, and that the church was to wait these all the time she continued in the wilderness, as yet she was."⁶⁶

In America, as in Europe and in England, two kinds of Seekers existed. Roger Williams, for example, waited for a new dispensation of apostolic authority, to a return to the practice of baptism and communion, and the anticipated literal return of Christ and the establishment of his kingdom. The Quakers, who began entering the colonies in 1654, quickly gathered the spiritualistic Seekers. Quakers eliminated all distinctions between clergy and laity, downgraded scripture in favor of direct revelation, eliminated the sacraments of baptism and communion, and rejected the physical and organizational structure of established churches. Contrary to Roger Williams's view, Quakers believed the return of Jesus Christ was figurative, referring only to the reception of the Inner Light by converts.⁶⁷ The Puritans of New England found both Williams and the Quakers distasteful and banished them from their colony.

Although Williams was a staunch defender of religious liberty, he also fiercely resisted the Quakers. He rejected the belief that ordinances would never again be necessary, that the Second Coming was within the believer, and especially the claim that George Fox and his associates were "Apostles and Messengers

of Christ Jesus.”⁶⁸ In 1676, Williams wrote to Fox: “I profess that if my soul could find rest in joining any of the churches professing Christ Jesus now extant, I would readily and gladly do it, yea unto themselves whom I now opposed [i.e., the Quakers].”⁶⁹ Despite his animosity, Williams gave Fox’s followers sanctuary in his Rhode Island colony.

When Williams presided over the Salem church in 1633, he advocated a complete separation from the Church of England. At Salem, according to John Cotton, Williams would not receive persons into “Church-fellowship untill they first disclaime[d] their Churches in England as no Churches” and “rejected all Communion with the Parish Assemblies, so much as in hearing the Word amongst them.”⁷⁰ John Cannes’s *Necessitie of Separation from the Church of England* (1634), in the opinion of Williams, “unanswerably proved” the correctness of separating from the Church of England “to seek out the true way of Gods [sic] worship according to Christ Jesus.”⁷¹ For a short time after leaving Salem, he associated with the Anabaptists in Providence, Rhode Island.

Soon after his baptism by Anabaptist Ezekiel Holyman in 1638 and subsequent founding of a church of immersed believers at Providence, Williams became convinced that the authority to perform the ordinances had been lost in the apostasy and that no one could restore them without a special revelation from God. After describing Williams’s baptism in his *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), Cotton Mather stated:

But Mr. Williams quickly told them, *That being himself misled, he had led them likewise out of the way*: he was now satisfied that there was none upon Earth that could Administer Baptism, and so that their *Last Baptism*, as well as their *First*, was a *Nullity*, for the want of a *called Administration*: he advised them therefore to *Forego* all, to *Dislike* everything, and *Wait* for the coming of *New Apostles*; whereupon they dissolved themselves, and became that Sort of Sect we term *Seekers*, keeping that one Principle, *That every one should have Liberty to worship God according to the Light of his own Conscience*; but owning of no true *Churches* or *Ordinances* now in the World.⁷²

Although Williams never used the term “Seeker” to identify himself, he obviously held Seeker beliefs. According to one contemporary, Williams believed that “there is no church, no sacraments, no pastors, no church-officers or ordinances in the world, nor has been since a few years after the apostles.”⁷³ John Winthrop

reported that Williams questioned the validity of his baptism, because he was unable "to derive the authority of it from the apostles, otherwise than by the ministers of England, (whom he judged to be ill authority,) so he conceived God would raise up some [new] apostolic power."⁷⁴ Despite all efforts at reformation, Williams declared in *The Bloudy Tenent* that the Puritans of Massachusetts had not "separated from the rubbish of Antichristian confusions and desolations" and "must needs confesse, that as yet their Soules are farre from the knowledge of the foundation of a true Christian Church." There is no foundation for a true church, explained Williams, because there is no apostolic ministry.⁷⁵ Williams would wait, wrote John Cotton in 1647, "till God shall stirre up himselfe, or some other new Apostles to recover, and restore all the Ordinances, and Churches of Christ out of the ruines of Antichristian apostasie."⁷⁶

Williams seems to have contacted the London Seekers during his two visits to England in 1643–44 and 1651–54. His influence on them was such that a leading English Puritan, Richard Baxter, referred to Williams in 1656 as "the father of the Seekers in London."⁷⁷ Though Baxter's statement is probably an exaggeration, it nevertheless revealed Williams's close, albeit short-lived, association with the London Seekers.⁷⁸

Most English and Continental Seekers had adopted a "moderate" Calvinism.⁷⁹ But Seekers in post-Revolutionary America followed the trend of the primitive gospel movement toward Arminianism, which attacked the dogmas of election, predestination, and original sin. Seekers were also excited by the heightened millennial expectations characteristic of American religion at the time.

One independent Seeker, Asa Wild, of Amsterdam, New York, published in 1824 a short work describing his revolt against Puritanism and his conversion to Seekerism. His work, *A Short Sketch of the Religious Experience, and Spiritual Travels, of Asa Wild*, outlines the classic Seeker position and demonstrates his yearning for a restoration and the Millennium.⁸⁰

Wild describes his New York mentors, beginning with Jared Spaulding, of Providence, New York, who taught him the Seeker gospel in 1823.⁸¹ Wild was further instructed in Seekerism by Eliot Ward, of Pittstown, New York,⁸² and eventually converted to the Seeker position, receiving a revelation in late 1823 of the imminent destruction of the wicked and the restoration of the true church.⁸³

Another Seeker, Erastus Hanchett of Lima, New York, implored his countrymen to "come out of the troubles of the world, and vain speculations and inventions of the human will, in matters of religion, into that perfect peace. . . . And say not in yourselves, that this state is not attainable."⁸⁴ In 1825, Hanchett, a spiritualistic Seeker, published *A Serious Call in Christian Love, to All People*, which outlined his belief in the "religion of revelation." After describing the miracles and spiritual gifts enjoyed in the primitive church, Hanchett declared: "If these signs are to follow the true believer in Christ; I would ask the candid reader, where shall we find one in the present day."⁸⁵ Hanchett's was a plea shared by many.

— NOTES —

1. In Ben E. Rich, *Scrap Book of Mormon Literature* (Chicago: Henry C. Etten and Co., n.d.), 1:544-45. Letter dated 6 Jan. 1831, original in LDS church archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

2. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, comps. and eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 381-82. Cf. Joseph Smith, Jr., et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1964), 6:478-79; hereafter HC.

3. For Christian primitivism generally, see Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. 4: *The Great Century, A.D. 1800-A.D. 1914* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1941), 428; Sidney E. Mead, "Denominationalism: The Shape of Protestantism in America," *Church History* 23 (Dec. 1954): 295-99; B. Cecil Lambert, "The Rise of the Anti-Mission Baptists: Sources and Leaders, 1800-1840," Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1958, 67-410; James DeForest Murch, *Christians Only: A History of the Restoration Movement* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1962), 63-137; William Garrett West, *Burton W. Stone: Early American Advocate of Christian Unity* (Nashville, 1954), 1-6; I. Daniel Rupp, comp., *He Pasa Ekklesia. An Original History of the Religious Denominations at Present Existing in the United States* (Philadelphia, 1844), 166, 251, 257, 264, 520-21, 731; William Warren Sweet, *Religion in the Development of American Culture, 1765-1840* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1963), 193-98, 203-6, 216-33; Elmer T. Clark, *Small Sects in America* (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1937), 269-76; Nathan O. Hatch, "The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People," *Journal of American History* 67 (Dec. 1980): 545-67. Christian Primitivism in early Mormonism is explored in Marvin S. Hill, "The Role of Christian Primitivism in the Origin and Development of the Mormon Kingdom, 1830-1844," Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1968, and "The Shaping of the Mormon Mind in

New England and New York," *Brigham Young University Studies* 9 (Spring 1969): 351-72.

4. By 1850 the Campbellites and the Mormons were listed seventh and ninth, respectively, in numerical strength among religious sects in the United States. See Daniel Dorchester, *The Problem of Religious Progress* (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1881), 538-40.

5. Mead, "Denominationalism," 295-96.

6. For a general history of Anabaptism, see James Hastings, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 13 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908-21), 1:406-12; Harold S. Bender, et al., eds., *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Scottdale, 1955-59), 1:113-16; William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story* (Grand Rapids, 1976); and Robert Friedmann, "Recent Interpretations of Anabaptism," *Church History* 24 (1955): 132-51. For comparisons between Anabaptism and Mormonism, see David B. Davis, "The New England Origins of Mormonism," *New England Quarterly* 26 (June 1953): 148-65; Robert J. McCue, "Similarities and Differences in the Anabaptist Restitution and the Mormon Restoration," M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1959; William E. Juhnke, "Anabaptism and Mormonism: A Study in Comparative History," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 2 (1982): 38-46; and D. Michael Quinn, "Socioreligious Radicalism of the Mormon Church: A Parallel to the Anabaptists," in *New Views of Mormon History: A Collection of Essays in Honor of Leonard J. Arrington*, eds. Davis Bitton and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), 363-86. Caution should be taken with regard to the Anabaptist concept of "restoration" since it refers to a personal commitment and not to the reestablishment of a lost church. See Friedmann, "Recent Interpretations of Anabaptism," 137.

7. Tho[mas] Pierce, *The Primitive Rule of Reformation: Delivered in a Sermon before His Majesty at Whitehall, Febr. 1, 1662. In Vindication of Our Church against the Novelties of Rome* (London, 1663), 6-7.

8. *Ibid.*, 13, 23-30.

9. *Ibid.*, 14.

10. *Ibid.*, 31, 10.

11. On Cartwright's primitivism, see Andrew Forrest Scott Pearson, *Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism, 1535-1603* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1966), esp. 26-29, 42, 60, 89-90, 188, 207-8, and *Church and State: Political Aspects of Sixteenth Century Puritanism* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1928), esp. 11, 120, 123-24. Especially helpful are John Kenneth Reynold Luoma, "The Primitive Church as a Normative Principle in the Theology of the Sixteenth Century: The Anglican-Puritan Debate Over Church Polity as Represented by Richard Hooker and Thomas Cartwright," Ph.D. diss., Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1974, and James C. Spalding, "Restitution as a Normative Factor for Puritan Dissent," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 44 (March 1976): 47-63. For the important documents dealing with the Puritan revolt, see Walter Howard Frere and C. E. Douglas, eds., *Puritan Manifestoes: A Study of the Origin of the Puritan Revolt* (London: SPCK, 1954).

12. Luoma, "The Primitive Church as a Normative Principle"; Stanley Archer, *Richard Hooker* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983); Robert Kenneth Faulkner, *Richard Hooker and the Politics of a Christian England* (Berkeley:

University of California Press, 1981); Peter Munz, *The Place of Hooker in the History of Thought* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1971); and W. Speed Hill, ed., *Studies in Richard Hooker: Essays Preliminary to an Edition of His Works* (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1972). Hooker's works have been published in John Keble, ed., *The Works of Richard Hooker*, 7th ed. (New York: G. Olms Verlag, 1977).

13. That the Puritans of New England were nonseparating is discussed in Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963), 64–66.

14. Perry Miller, *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts, 1630–1650* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933), 160.

15. [Increase Mather], *The Necessity of Reformation* (Boston, 1679), 2.

16. On the fragmentation of Puritan society, see William G. McLoughlin, *New England Dissent, 1630–1833*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), and Franklin Hamlin Littell, *From State Church to Pluralism: A Protestant Interpretation of Religion in American History* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1962).

17. On New England economics and the decline of Puritanism, see Bernard Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955).

18. Alan Heimert and Perry Miller, *The Great Awakening: Documents Illustrating the Crisis and Its Consequences* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1967), xiv. In connection with revivalism and the decline of Puritanism, see James Deetz's discussion of the change in the dominant design of New England gravestones, *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1977), 64–90. Deetz found that the decline of the death's-head marker and the rise of a new design, the winged cherub, coincided with the decline of orthodox Puritanism and the revivalistic activity of the mid-eighteenth century.

19. See, for example, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1945), 350–60.

20. Sidney E. Mead, "From Coercion to Persuasion: Another Look at the Rise of Religious Liberty and the Emergence of Denominationalism," *Church History* 25 (Dec. 1956): 317–37.

21. Latourette, *History of the Expansion of Christianity*, 4:428.

22. My discussion of the primitive gospel movement in America owes much to Marvin S. Hill's "Role of Christian Primitivism," 6–36.

23. Marvin S. Hill, "Quest for Refuge: An Hypothesis as to the Social Origins and Nature of the Mormon Political Kingdom," *Journal of Mormon History* 2 (1975): 4; see also Geoffrey F. Spencer, "Anxious Saints: The Early Mormons, Social Reform, and Status Anxiety," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 1 (1981): 43–53. On the instability of the early national period, see Roland Berthoff, *An Unsettled People: Social Order and Disorder in American History* (New York, 1971).

24. Joseph Priestley, *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 2 vols., 3d ed. (Boston, 1797), 1:iii.

25. John W. Nevin, "The Sect System," *Mercerburg Review* 1 (1849): 499. See also Mead, "Denominationalism," 295–99.

26. David Millard, "Christians, or Christian Connexion," in Rupp, *He Pasa Ekklesia*, 166.

27. *Memoir of Elder Abner Jones by His Son, A.D. Jones* (Boston, 1842), 49.

28. *Ibid.*, 34-36, 48.

29. *Ibid.*, 49-52, 62, and Rupp, *He Pasa Ekklesia*, 167.

30. *Ibid.*, 64. See also *The Life, Conversion, Preaching, Travels and Sufferings of Elias Smith* (Portsmouth, 1816), 58.

31. Rupp, *He Pasa Ekklesia*, 168.

32. Wilbur E. MacClenny, *The Early History of the Christian Church in the South* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1910), 117, and Rupp, *He Pasa Ekklesia*, 167. Probably the best treatment of O'Kelly is Charles Franklin Kilgore, *The James O'Kelly Schism in the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Mexico City, 1963). O'Kelly's primary works are *The Author's Apology for Protesting against the Methodist Episcopal Government* (Richmond, 1798) and *A Vindication of the Author's Apology* (Raleigh, 1801).

33. William Garrett West, *Barton W. Stone: Early American Advocate of Christian Unity* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1954), 61, 75.

34. Rupp, *He Pasa Ekklesia*, 168.

35. For primary documents of Stone's movement, see "The Last Will and Testament of Springfield Presbytery," in John Rogers, *The Biography of Elder B. Warren Stone* (New York, 1972), 51-53; Barton W. Stone, *An Apology for Renouncing the Jurisdiction of the Synod of Kentucky* (Lexington, KY, 1804); [Richard McNemar], *Observations on Church Government, by the Presbytery of Springfield* (Cincinnati, 1807); Robert Marshall and James Thompson, *A Brief Historical Account of Sundry Things in the Doctrines and State of the Christian, or, as It Is Commonly Called, the Newlight Church* (Cincinnati, 1811).

36. Rupp, *He Pasa Ekklesia*, 168.

37. Lynn A. McMillon, "The Quest for the Apostolic Church: A Study of Scottish Origins of American Restorationism," Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 1972, traces Campbell's primitive gospel influences to his association in Glasgow with Grenville Ewing, Robert and James Haldane, and other Scotch Independents. But Nathan O. Hatch, "The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People," 551, stresses the Americanisms in the Christian movement and minimizes Campbell's Scottish influence.

38. W. Garrison and A. T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ* (St. Louis: Christian Board of Education, 1948), 139, 155.

39. See Robert Frederick West, *Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948); Garrison and DeGroot, *Disciples of Christ*; David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *Quest for a Christian America: The Disciples of Christ and American Society to 1866* (Nashville, 1966). See also Alexander Campbell, ed., *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell* (Cincinnati, 1861); and Robert Richardson, ed., *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 2 vols. (Cincinnati, 1913).

40. For general treatments, see Hastings, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 11:350-51; Samuel Macauley Jackson, et al., eds., *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 12 vols. (New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1908-12), 12:235; M. J. Havran, "Seekers," *New Catholic*

Encyclopedia, 17 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967), 13:47. For English and colonial American Seekerism, see Rufus M. Jones, *Mysticism and Democracy in the English Commonwealth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932), esp. chap. 3; Rufus M. Jones, *Spiritual Reformers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1971), 84–86, 340–42; George Arthur Johnson, “From Seeker to Finder: A Study in Seventeenth-Century English Spiritualism Before the Quakers,” *Church History* 17 (1948): 299–315, and “From Seeker to Finder,” Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1948; James Fulton Maclear, “‘The Heart of New England Rent’: The Mystical Element in Early Puritan History,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 42 (March 1956): 621–52; James Anthony Vendettuoli, “The English Seekers: John Jackson, the Principal Spokesman,” Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1958; John Garrett, *Roger Williams: Witness Beyond Christendom, 1603–1683* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), esp. chap. 7; and James Ernst, *Roger Williams: New England Firebrand* (New York: AMS Press, 1969), esp. chap. 2; Mauro Calamandrei, “Neglected Aspects of Roger Williams’ Thought,” *Church History* 21 (1952): 239–58.

41. See Jerald C. Brauer, “Puritan Mysticism and the Development of Liberalism,” *Church History* 19 (1950): 151–70; see also Maclear, “‘The Heart of New England Rent,’” 621–52; Jerald C. Brauer, “Francis Rous, Puritan Mystic, 1579–1659: An Introduction to the Study of the Mystical Element in Puritanism,” Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1948; and Winthrop Hudson, “Mystical Religion in the Puritan Commonwealth,” *Journal of Religion* 28 (Jan. 1948): 51–56.

42. See *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 10:235. A contemporary statement is given by Thomas Edward: “Independency is the door to let in to Anabaptisme, and Anabaptisme was the door to let into the Truth, meaning that from thence they would come to be Seekers, Perfectionists, &c. Independency and other Sects are so neer of blood, that a man may for the most part without any great Solecisme say, Independency is all Sectarisme, and all Sectarisme is Independency; Independents turn Anabaptists, Seekers, &c. and Sectaries turn Independents; we have now few Independents (strictly so called) but Independents, Antimonians, Independent Anabaptists, Seekers, &c.” *Ganoraena: or, A Catalogue and Discovery of many of the Errours, Heresies, Blasphemies and pernicious Practices of the Sectaries* (London, 1646), 125.

43. See Champlin Burrage, *The Early English Dissenters in the Light of Recent Research (1550–1641)*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), 1:123, 192–94, 216–20; Robert Barclay, *The Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth* (London, 1876), 173–74.

44. See, for example, Thomas Carlyle, ed., *Oliver Cromwell’s Letters and Speeches*, 4 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1897), 1:254; also Wilbur Cortez Abbott, ed., *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937–47), 1:416. On Cromwell’s independence from any particular sect and his sympathy with Seekers and others, see C. H. Firth, *Oliver Cromwell and the Rule of the Puritans in England* (London: Putnam, 1947), 150, and Antonia Fraser, *Cromwell: The Lord Protector* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), 405.

45. See John Saltmarsh, *Sparkles of Glory* (London, 1647), 289 ff., *Groanes For Liberty* (London, 1646), 22–23, and *Smoke in the Temple* (London, 1646), 7–13. See Thomas Edwards, *Ganoraena*, 2 vols. (London, 1646), 2:13–14.

46. See Jones, *Spiritual Reformers*; Hans-Jurgen Goertz, ed., *Profiles of Radical Reformers: Biographical Sketches from Thomas Muntzer to Paracelsus* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1982).

47. The most developed expression of Dutch Seekerism is in the tract *Lucerna super candelabro* (Amsterdam, 1662), probably written by Peter Balling, a Collegiant of Rynsburg, and subsequently translated into English by Quaker Benjamin Furley as *The Light on the Candlestick* (London, 1665). See also William Penn's description in his *Account of William Penn's Travels in Germany and Holland* ([London], 1694).

48. See Hastings, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 11:350.

49. John Knox, *The Confutation of the errors of the careless by necessitie* (London, 1560). This is pointed out in Jones, *Mysticism and Democracy*, 63.

50. Everard published Hans Denck's *Confession of Faith*, Sebastian Franck's *The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil*, and Sebastian Castellio's *Theologia Germanica*. See Jones, *Mysticism and Democracy*, 64–66. Everard also translated and published several alchemical works, including *Hermes Trismegistus* (London, 1657). See Robert M. Schuler, "Some Spiritual Alchemies of Seventeenth-Century England," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 41 (April-June 1980): 308–18.

51. Robert Bayllie, *Anabaptism, the True Fountaine of Independency, Brownisme, Antinomy, Familisme, And the most of the other errors, which for the time doe trouble the Church of England*, *Unsealed* (London, 1647), 96–97.

52. Although John Jackson divided Seekers into three categories, most contemporaries recognized only two types. See Robert Barclay, *The Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth* (London, 1876), 413. One scholar attempted to distinguish six types of Seekers: C. E. Whiting, *Studies in English Puritanism from the Restoration to the Revolution, 1660–1688* (New York and Toronto: Macmillan Co., 1931), 271–72. I find it most convenient to place Seekers into one of the two generally accepted categories.

53. There are several reasons for using the term "spiritualistic" rather than "mystic" in referring to this type of Seeker. A major distinction pertains to the role of the spirit. While the Holy Spirit plays a part in mysticism, the spiritual experience is temporary and usually ecstatic. With spiritualism, on the other hand, life is lived so as to enjoy the continual possession of the spirit, leading ultimately to human perfection. Iconoclasm is another aspect of spiritualism, which is rarely if ever the case with mysticism. My distinction between "mysticism" and "spiritualism" is influenced by George Arthur Johnson, "From Seeker to Finder," 299–300. However, I have not used, nor do I agree with, Johnson's term "Finder" in reference to spiritualistic Seekers. Most did not become Finders until their conversion to Quakerism. See also Brauer, "Puritan Mysticism," 153; and Vendettuoli, "English Seekers," 14–17.

54. William Allen, *A Doubt Resolved, or Satisfaction for the Seekers* (London, 1655), 37.

55. I know of no other writer who has used the expression "literalistic" Seekers, which I find useful as a comparative term. This is not to say that this type of Seeker was not spiritual.

56. Allen, *Doubt Resolved*, 14.

57. Saltmarsh, *Sparkles of Glory*, 292.

58. Sebastian Franck, *Chronicle* (1536), in Jones, *Mysticism and Democracy*, 66. See also Barclay, *The Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth*, 410–11.

59. See William C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1912), esp. 58–65, 78–97, and "The Swaledale Papers," *Journal of the Friends' Historical Society* 5 (1908): 3ff; John L. Nickalls, ed., *The Journal of George Fox* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), 106; *The First Publishers of Truth*, ed. Norman Penney (London: Friends' Historical Society, 1907); Elbert Russell, *The History of Quakerism* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1979), 31–32; and Champlin Burrage, "The Antecedents of Quakerism," *English Historical Review* 30 (1915): 78–90.

60. George Fox, *Great Mistery of the Great Whore Unfolded* (London, 1659), "The Epistle to the Reader" by Edward Burrough, unpaginated.

61. Charles Marshall, *A Short Narrative of My Pilgrimage*, in Rufus M. Jones, *Mysticism and Democracy in the English Commonwealth*, 99.

62. George Fox, *A Journal*, ed. Margaret Fox (London, 1694), 8, 5, 23–24.

63. See Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 78–97; Russell, *History of Quakerism*, 30–35. Concerning the preparedness of the Westmoreland Seekers to the Quaker message, two former inhabitants reported that it "was a Field white unto the Harvest, a People ripe to be gathered." Thomas Camm and Charles Marshal, *The Memory of the Righteous Revived* (London, 1689), unpaginated.

64. Rufus M. Jones, *The Quakers in the American Colonies* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), 57–58, 65, 217–18.

65. Jones, *Quakers*, 23.

66. Jonathan Winthrop, *Winthrop's Journal "History of New England," 1630–1649*, ed. James Kendall Hosmer, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), 2:39.

67. See Rufus M. Jones, *Quakers*.

68. Roger Williams, *George Fox Digg'd out of His Burrowes* (London, 1676), 2.

69. In Emily Easton, *Roger Williams: Prophet and Pioneer* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1930), 224.

70. John Cotton, *A Coppy of a Letter of Mr. Cotton of Boston, in New England, Sent in Answer of Certain Objections Made against Their Discipline and Orders There* ([London], 1641), 1; John Cotton, *A Reply to Mr. Williams his Examination*, 61, published at the back of Cotton's *The Bloudy Tenent, Washed... whereunto is added a Reply to Mr. Williams Answer, to Mr. Cottons Letter* (London, 1647).

71. Roger Williams, *Mr. Cottons Letter Lately Printed, Examined and Answered* (London, 1644), 39.

72. Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana: or, The Ecclesiastical History of New-England* (London, 1702), Bk. VII, 8–9. On Roger Williams's Seekerism, see John Garrett, *Roger Williams: Witness Beyond Christendom*,

1603–1683 (New York: Macmillan Co., 1970), 145–75; and James Ernst, *Roger Williams: New England Firebrand* (New York: AMS Press, 1969), 207–8, 226–27, 254–55, 282, 479–92; Vernon Louis Parrington, “Roger Williams, Seeker,” in *Main Currents in American Thought*, 3 vols. (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1927–30), 1:62–75.

73. In Benjamin Hanbury, *Historical Memorials Relating to the Independents, or Congregationalists*, 3 vols. (London, 1839–44), 2:444.

74. Winthrop, *Winthrop's Journal*, 1:309 (dated 5 July 1639).

75. [Roger Williams], *The Bloudy Tenent* ([London], 1644), 22, [21].

76. Cotton, *Reply to Mr. Williams*, 2; cf. p. 9.

77. Richard Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof of Infants Church-Membership and Baptism* (London, 1656), 147.

78. Edmund S. Morgan minimizes Williams's contact with the English Seekers. See *Roger Williams: The Church and the State* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967), 53, 152n56. John Garrett, on the other hand, argues for a closer contact. See *Roger Williams: Witness Beyond Christendom*, 29, 145–75.

79. Robert Bayllie reports that some Seekers were antitrinitarian or antimonian. See *Anabaptism*, 96–97.

80. [Asa Wild], *A Short Sketch of the Religious Experience, and Spiritual Travels, of Asa Wild, of Amsterdam, N. Y. Written by himself, by Divine Command, and the most infallible Inspiration* (Amsterdam, NY: printed for the author by D. Wells, 1824). On 22 October 1823, the *Wayne Sentinel* reprinted an article from the *Mohawk Herald* (Amsterdam, NY) describing Wild's forthcoming work. On 27 November 1823, Boston's *Zion's Herald* announced the publication of Wild's work and described his major beliefs. However, Wild was finishing his book in February 1824 (*Short Sketch*, 83). Asa Wild, of Amsterdam, Montgomery County, New York, appears in the 1830 and 1840 federal censuses. In 1830, he was married, had three children, and was between thirty and forty years of age. He does not appear to have held a professional occupation, at least in 1840; he is listed under “Manufactures and Trades.” Federal Census of New York, Montgomery County, 1830, 115; Federal Census of New York, Montgomery County, 1840, 293.

81. See Wild, *Short Sketch*, 43–44. Jared Spaulding, of Providence, Saratoga County, New York, appears in the 1820 and 1830 federal censuses. In 1820 he was married, had three children, and was between thirty and forty years of age. Federal Census of New York, Saratoga County, 1820, 239; Federal Census of New York, Saratoga County, 1830, 253.

82. See Wild, *Short Sketch*, 50–51. Eliot Ward, of Pittstown, Rensselaer County, New York, appears in the 1830 federal census. He was married, had five children, and was between thirty and forty years of age in 1830. He was thus between twenty and thirty years of age in 1820. Federal Census of New York, Rensselaer County, 1830, 142.

83. Wild, *Short Sketch*, 77–78.

84. *Wayne Sentinel*, 23 Feb. 1825.

85. Erastus Hanchett, *A Serious Call in Christian Love, to All People; in the Form of A Letter to Henry Colman, Minister of the Unitarian Independent Congregational Church Society, in Salem, Mass. Being an answer in part, to a Book which he read to his people on the 7th December, 1824, at the opening of a New Meeting House. Also An Appendix to the same, being an Address in*

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Love to all people, particularly those who hold the doctrines of Calvinism and Universalism (Boston: Printed for the author, [1825]), 9, 10. Erastus Hanchett of Lima, Livingston County, New York, appears in the 1820, 1830, and 1840 federal censuses. In 1820, Hanchett was married, had four children, and was between thirty and forty years of age. He did not hold a professional occupation and is listed under "Manufactures and Trades" in the 1840 census. Federal Census of New York, Ontario County, 1820, 363; Federal Census of New York, Livingston County, 1830, 83; Federal Census of New York, Livingston County, 1840, 143.

FROM Seeker to Finder

The crucial difference within the primitive gospel movement becomes apparent in the lives of Joseph Smith's parents. Like other Primitivists, Lucy and Joseph Smith, Sr., were to conclude after years of wandering from church to church that no denomination conformed to primitive Christianity. However, both found themselves at opposite ends of the Primitivist spectrum. While Joseph became more settled in his Seekerism, Lucy searched for a church where she could find spiritual stability. The simmering differences in their religious philosophies came to full boil when Lucy and three of her children were drawn to the Presbyterians during a revival at Palmyra, New York, in 1824. Until then her son's visions had contained typical Seeker pronouncements about the state of Christianity and had not yet made mention of a restoration.

Young Joseph found the revival disturbing. It not only disrupted the community but divided his family—he and his father on one side, and his mother, brothers Hyrum and Samuel, and sister Sophronia on the other. However, young Joseph's visions would culminate in a church that would reunite his family, satisfying both his father's Seeker expectations and his mother's desire for religious community and stability.

Lucy Mack Smith's own parents had been religiously at odds. During most of his life, Lucy's father, Solomon, believed in universal salvation as taught by the Universalists. The major tenet of the Universalists, according to their convention in New Hampshire in 1803, was belief in "one God, whose nature is Love, revealed in one Lord Jesus Christ, by one Holy Spirit of Grace, who will finally restore the whole family of mankind to holiness and happiness."¹ Because of this, Solomon said he "set at naught [God's] councils and words." Lucy's mother, Lydia, on the other

hand, was a staunch Congregationalist and taught her children the Puritan ethic. Only later did Solomon abandon his belief in Universalism and convert to the orthodox faith, a conversion he described in a chapbook he published, probably in 1811.²

The unsettled situation at home must have caused Lucy some spiritual confusion. When she was about nineteen years old she strongly desired a "change of heart" but anguished over which church to join. Her own expression of her dilemma revealed acquaintance with Primitivistic doctrines and insight into the social consequences of particular beliefs:

If I remain a member of no church, all religious people will say I am of the world; and if I join some one of the different denominations, all the rest will say I am in error. No church will admit that I am right, except the one with which I am associated. This makes them witness against each other; and how can I decide in such a case as this, seeing they are all unlike the Church of Christ, as it existed in former days!³

In 1796 Lucy married a man similarly perplexed about religion, although his Primitivism stemmed from independence more than from uncertainty. Joseph Smith, Sr., was more liberal, apparently agreeing with Lucy's father about universal salvation.⁴ Joseph Smith, Sr., had been raised by a father whose curious blend of theological views was legendary in his community of Topsfield, Massachusetts. Joseph's father, Asael, was a rationalist whose beliefs included Universalism and Seekerism.⁵ He refused to join any of the churches "because he could not reconcile their teachings with the scriptures and his reason."⁶ In a letter written in 1799 with instructions not to be read until after his death, Asael explained to his wife and children:

And as to religion I would not wish to point out any particular form to you, but first I would wish you to Search the Scriptures, and consult sound [reas]on and See if they . . . are not Sufficient to Evince to you, that religion is a Necessary theme. [T]hen I would wish you to Study the Nature of religion, and See whether it consists in outward formalities; or in the hidden man of the heart.⁷

In an earlier letter Asael expressed similar Seeker hopes. Asael saw God's hand in establishing the United States government and believed in the imminent fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy about the restoration of God's kingdom on earth. On 14 January 1796 he wrote to his friend Jacob Perkins Towne: "I Believe

that the Stone is now cut out of the mountain, without hands, Spoke of by Daniel, and has smitten the image upon his feet, By which the iron, the Clay, the Brass, the Silver, & the gold (viz, all mon[ar]chial and Eclesiaistical Terony) will be Broken to peaces and Becom as the Chaff of the Summer Thrashing flore, the wind Shall carry them all away that there Shall be no place found for them.”⁸ According to Smith family tradition, Asael, although unbaptized, nevertheless converted to Mormonism shortly before his death on 1 November 1830. Asael’s son John recorded that his father believed Mormonism fulfilled his Seeker expectations, for his “father received with gladness, that which Joseph [Sr.] communicated; and remarked, that he had always expected that something would appear to make known the true Gospel.”⁹

In 1802, soon after she and her husband had moved to Randolph, Vermont, Lucy fell deathly ill and made a covenant to serve God if she recovered. When her health returned, she began attending various churches “for the purpose of getting information, and finding, if it were possible, some congenial spirit who could enter into my feelings, and thus be able to strengthen and assist me in carrying out my resolutions.” Her conservative Primitivism is evident in that she continued her search for religious affiliation even though she had already decided no church followed the New Testament pattern. But after some investigation, she was again forced to conclude that “there was not then upon earth the religion which I sought. I therefore determined to examine my Bible, and, taking Jesus and his disciples for my guide, to endeavour to obtain from God that which man could neither give nor take away.”¹⁰ One could conclude that Lucy was a committed “Seeker.”¹¹ However, she submitted to baptism by a local minister, saying, “I considered it my duty to be baptized, and, finding a minister who was willing to baptize me, and leave me free in regard to joining any religious denomination, I stepped forward and yielded obedience to this ordinance.”¹² Lucy’s primitive gospel leaning was basically conservative, an insecurity about which church to join rather than a belief that ministers lacked authority to baptize.

Meanwhile, Lucy attended some Methodist meetings, and for a time her husband accompanied her. But Asael’s criticism caused Joseph Sr. to stop attending. “I retired to a grove not far distant,” Lucy recalled, “where I prayed to the Lord in behalf of my husband—that the true Gospel might be presented to him, and that his heart might be softened so as to receive it, or, that he

might become more religiously inclined.”¹³ Here, Lucy implied that she and her husband disagreed about religion. Lucy had a dream which encouraged her that one day Joseph would hear and receive the true gospel.¹⁴

While living in Royalton, Vermont, in 1811, according to Lucy, Joseph Sr.’s “mind became much excited upon the subject of religion; yet he would not subscribe to any particular system of faith, but contended for the ancient order, as established by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and his Apostles.”¹⁵ Joseph Sr. had a visionary dream which confirmed his Seeker beliefs. He dreamed that he was in the middle of an “open, barren field,” where a “death-like silence prevailed,” and all around he saw “nothing save dead fallen timber.” As he wondered about the meaning of this, an “attendant spirit” explained: “this field is the world, which now lieth inanimate and dumb, in regard to the true religion, or plan of salvation.” The spirit then told him that on one side of the road just ahead he would find a certain box, “the contents of which, if you eat thereof, will make you wise, and give unto you wisdom and understanding.” (Eleven years later, Joseph Jr. would open a similar box, the contents of which would give him wisdom regarding the true religion.) As a result of his experience, the senior Smith became “more confirmed than ever, in the opinion that there was no order or class of religionists that knew any more concerning the Kingdom of God, than those of the world.”¹⁶

Soon afterwards the Smiths relocated to Lebanon, New Hampshire, where Joseph Sr. had another memorable dream. Again he found himself in a “desolate field,” but this time he saw a delicious fruit-bearing tree which represented the “pure love of God.” As he shared the fruit with his family, he noticed nearby a “spacious building” filled with “finely dressed” people who “pointed the finger of scorn” at them for eating the fruit. But he was told that the building must fall, for it was spiritual “Babylon,” a reference to sectarian churches.¹⁷

Joseph Sr.’s Seekerism was not new to Lucy. Her oldest brother, Jason, was a Seeker from age sixteen. He believed that “by prayer and faith the gifts of the Gospel, which were enjoyed by the ancient disciples of Christ, might be attained. . . . He was also of the opinion that God would, at some subsequent period, manifest his power as he had anciently done—in signs and wonders.” Jason was an itinerant preacher and faith healer who became the leader of a communal experiment in the Canadian

province of New Brunswick. Shortly after his visit to the Smiths' small Tunbridge farm, sometime before 1804, Jason "gathered together some thirty families, on a tract of land which he had purchased for the purpose of assisting poor persons to the means of sustaining themselves."¹⁸

Evidently Joseph Jr. was deeply impressed by the Primitivism of his parents, especially his father's Seekerism. In an 1832 autobiography, Smith described his reactions to the various denominations:

At about the age of twelve years my mind become seriously imprest with regard to the all important concerns for the welfare of my immortal Soul which led me to searching the scriptures believing as I was taught, that they contained the word of God. Thus applying myself to them and my intimate acquaintance with those of different denominations led me to marvel exceedingly for I discovered that they did not . . . adorn their profession by a holy walk and Godly conversation agreeable to what I found contained in that sacred depository. This was a grief to my Soul. Thus from the age of twelve years to fifteen I pondered many things in my heart concerning the situation of the world of mankind, the contentions and divi[s]ions, the wicke[d]ness and abominations, and the darkness which pervaded the minds of mankind. My mind become exceedingly distressed for I become convicted of my sins and by searching the scriptures I found that . . . mankind did not come unto the Lord but that they had apostatised from the true and living faith. There was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the New Testament.¹⁹

Joseph's description of the apostate condition of the churches is strictly Seeker and emphasizes religious hypocrisy and spiritual poverty rather than corrupt doctrine—they had departed from the "true and *living* faith." It was inward apostasy that mattered most to young Joseph. However, from this brief description of his early beliefs, it is difficult to determine how much of the Seeker philosophy Joseph accepted during this early stage of his development.

Despite his conclusion about the state of the churches, Joseph, like his parents, attended and sometimes participated in meetings. Pomeroy Tucker, a resident of Palmyra, reported that Smith "joined the probationary class of the Methodist church in Palmyra, and made some active demonstrations of engagedness, though his assumed convictions were insufficiently grounded or abiding

to carry him along to the saving point of conversion, and he soon withdrew from the class.”²⁰ Orsamus Turner, a Palmyra resident until the summer of 1822 and acquaintance of the Smiths, claimed young Joseph’s interest in Methodism was more than casual. “After catching a spark of Methodism in the camp meeting, away down in the woods on the Vienna road,” Turner remembered, Smith became “a very passable exhorter in evening meetings.”²¹ Smith later admitted that his “mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect, and I felt some desire to be united with them,” though uncertainty prevented his actual membership.²²

What is known today as Joseph Smith’s “First Vision” did not turn him into a Finder. This personal experience, which he said occurred in 1820 or 1821,²³ served only to confirm that the churches were in a state of spiritual apostasy. In the earliest account of the vision, Smith wrote:

I cried unto the Lord for mercy . . . [and] the Lord heard my cry in the wilderness and while in the attitude of calling upon the Lord . . . a pillar of . . . light above the brightness of the sun at noon day came down from above and rested upon me. I was filled with the spirit of God and the Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord. He spake unto me saying, “Joseph my son thy sins are forgiven thee. Go thy way, walk in my statutes and keep my commandments. Behold I am the Lord of Glory. I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life. Behold the world lieth in sin at this time and none doeth good, no not one. They have turned asside from the gospel and keep not my commandments. They draw near to me with their lips while their hearts are far from me and mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit them according to th[e]ir ungodliness and to bring to pass that which hath been spoken by the mouth of the prophets and Ap[o]stles. Behold and lo, I come quickly as it [is] written of me, in the cloud clothed in the glory of my Father.” My soul was filled with love and for many days I could rejoice with great Joy and the Lord was with me.²⁴

Although Smith’s vision confirmed his father’s early dream that the world was spiritually dead—“none doeth good, no not one they have turned asside from the gospel”—it conveyed no information about a box to be opened or any promise of restoration. Certainly the vision’s account of the apostate condition of the world was Seeker in tone, focusing specifically on spiritual apostasy, but the absence of a restoration concept may indicate

that Smith did not yet appreciate fully this tenet. In fact, only as the Mormon restoration gradually unfolded did Joseph Smith clearly define the concepts of apostasy, restoration, and authority.

At the time of this first vision, Joseph Smith received neither a call to found a new religion nor a commandment to remain separate from the churches. What mattered was that he had been forgiven of his sins. After the vision, Smith's life continued as usual—until Smith again felt the need for repentance.²⁵ Meanwhile, he must have been comforted by the idea that church affiliation was not essential to salvation, since he was told that “all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life.” During such complete apostasy, as God confirmed in this vision, only membership in the invisible church could be important.

The event which put Joseph Smith on the road to restoration happened on the night of 21–22 September 1823²⁶ when Smith's second major prayer of repentance was again answered with another heavenly visitation. This time “an angel of the Lord,” whom Smith later identified as Moroni, appeared and declared to him the Lord's errand. In his 1832 account, Smith said that in addition to instructions concerning the Book of Mormon plates, the angel “revealed unto me many things concerning the inhabitants of the earth which since have been revealed in commandments and revelations.”²⁷ In his 1838 account, Smith reported that the angel quoted Bible passages concerning the destruction of the wicked.²⁸ Smith was called to translate the Book of Mormon, but again nothing was said about the restoration of a true church or of authority, nor did he receive any commandment regarding the existing churches.²⁹

Joseph Smith did not gain possession of the plates at this time. Instead, he met with the angel at the same time each year until the plates were finally delivered to him on 22 September 1827. Only gradually did Smith learn the religious significance of his angelic encounters. Meanwhile, important events would heighten the Smith family's awareness of religious issues of interest to Seekers.

On 19 November 1823, Joseph's oldest brother, Alvin, died. The family was devastated. Twenty years later Lucy used the term “shock” to describe the family's feelings. Adding to the trauma, the minister who delivered the funeral sermon “intimated very strongly that he had gone to hell” because he was not a member of a denomination.³⁰ Joseph Sr. was incensed by the minister's

remarks and ultimately, as Lucy recorded, "refused going any more, either for my gratification, or any other person's."³¹

Alvin's death thus pushed the senior Smith deeper into Seekerism and increased Lucy's insecurity. About this time (1824-25) a revival began in Palmyra, which would prompt Lucy and some of her children to join the Presbyterian church (in which they apparently kept active membership until about September 1828).³² Joseph Jr. followed his father's example by refusing to attend but told his mother and other family members that "it would do us no injury to join them, that if we did, we should not continue with them long, for we were mistaken in them, and did not know the wickedness of their hearts."³³ Joseph also prophesied against Henry Jessup, a deacon in the Presbyterian church whom Lucy and the others admired.

"You look at Deacon Jessup," said he, "and you hear him talk very piously. Well, you think he is a very good man. Now suppose that one of his poor neighbours should owe him the value of a cow, and that this poor man had eight little children; moreover, that he should be taken sick and die, leaving his wife with one cow, but destitute of every other means of supporting herself and family—now I tell you, that Deacon Jessup, religious as he is, would not scruple, to take the last cow from the poor widow and orphans, in order to secure the debt, notwithstanding he himself has an abundance of every thing."

"At the time [Joseph's prediction] seemed impossible to us," Lucy confessed, "yet one year had scarcely expired when we saw Joseph's supposition literally fulfilled."³⁴ Apparently Lucy and the others had not yet come to appreciate Joseph's gifts.

The revival which seems to have had the greatest impact on young Joseph and his family was the revival occurring in Palmyra in 1824-25. If the Palmyra revival of 1816-17 influenced Smith's early interest in religion, he failed to mention it in his 1832 history. Smith also neglected to mention in his 1832 history the revivals in 1819-20 which would have preceded his first vision. When he finally mentioned a revival, in an 1834 history prepared by Oliver Cowdery and later in his 1838 history, the details, including the name of the preacher, were drawn from the 1824-25 Palmyra revival which was so important to Smith's overall religious development.³⁵

Prior to his visionary experiences, Joseph Jr. had earned a reputation as a seer who could, by looking into a special stone,

find lost articles, foretell the future, and locate buried treasure. In late 1825 he belonged to a treasure-seeking company which traveled the countryside in search of Spanish and Indian treasure in Palmyra, Manchester, Colesville, South Bainbridge, Harmony, and other places in New York and Pennsylvania. Martin Harris, a prominent member of the community and later financial backer of the Book of Mormon, remembered that the Palmyra-Manchester treasure seekers "were digging for money supposed to have been hidden by the ancients" and that "it was reported by these money diggers, that they had found boxes, but before they could secure them, they would sink into the earth."³⁶

In early 1827 Smith married Emma Hale, of Harmony, Pennsylvania. That September, Josiah Stowell, Smith's financial backer in previous digging expeditions, came to visit the Smiths in Manchester, on the outskirts of Palmyra, and to dig for money.³⁷ Joseph Knight, Sr., Alvah Beaman, an expert in the use of divining rods, and Samuel Lawrence, another "seer," were also there.³⁸ During this reunion of the treasure seekers, Smith came into possession of the gold plates.

Martin Harris later remembered that "the money diggers claimed that they had as much right to the plates as Joseph had, as they were in company together. They claimed that Joseph had been a traitor, and had appropriated to himself that which belonged to them."³⁹ Smith severed his relationship with his friends and, according to Harris, "said the angel told him he must quit the company of the money-diggers. That there were wicked men among them. He must have no more to do with them. He must not lie, nor swear, nor steal."⁴⁰

Matters quickly worsened for Joseph Jr. as the money diggers tried to take the plates from him by force. Necessity finally forced him to move to Harmony, Pennsylvania, near the home of his father-in-law, Isaac Hale, where he was able to work on the translation of the Book of Mormon without much interference.

During a pause in the translation (14 June 1828 to 7 April 1829), Smith received a revelation (February 1829) for his father, which told him that "a marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men. . . . Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work; for behold the field is white already to harvest" (D&C 4:1, 3-4). The marvelous work was the Book of Mormon and the call was to be a missionary. The first mention of a restoration of the primitive church was made in March 1829, when God told Smith:

If the people of this generation harden not their hearts, I will work a reformation among them, and I will put down all lyings, and deceivings, and priestcrafts, and envyings, and strifes, and idolatries, and sorceries, and all manner of iniquities, and I will establish my church, like unto the church which was taught by my disciples in the days of old.⁴¹

This revelation was the first hint that God would establish a church according to the apostolic pattern. However, the revelation was unclear as to the manner in which the church would be restored. It could easily have been interpreted that the establishment of a primitive church would result from a "reformation" in the already existing churches. When Smith edited his revelations for publication six years later in 1835, he deleted this passage and replaced it with one of more definite Seeker leanings. Thus, the Book of Mormon became "the beginning of the rising up and the coming forth of my church out of the wilderness—clear as the moon, and fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (D&C 5:14). The original revelation had seemed to limit Smith's role in the restoration to the translation of the plates, as well. "He [Smith] has a gift to translate the book [of Mormon]," God said in the original revelation, "and I have commanded him that he shall pretend to no other gift, for I will grant him no other gift" (BoFC 4:2). Later, after Smith's calling had expanded to include his leadership of the restored church, he altered this passage to read: "You have a gift to translate the plates; and this is the first gift that I bestowed upon you: and I have commanded that you should pretend to no other gift until my purpose is fulfilled in this: for I will grant unto you no other gift until it is finished" (D&C 5:4). In 1835 Joseph also added two references to a future ordination (5: 6, 17) to conform to the concept of restoration as it had later developed. Several events subsequent to the original March 1829 revelation would help Smith define more clearly the concept of restoration and his role in it.

Smith and a new scribe, Oliver Cowdery, resumed translating on 7 April 1829 after a break of almost ten months. During this period, Smith's first scribe, Martin Harris, had lost the first 116 pages of translation.⁴² It was decided to continue translating where Smith and Harris had left off. A smaller section of gold plates repeated the period of time that had been covered in the lost translation. What became the first portion of the Book of Mormon was therefore translated last, during the month of June

1829. The order of translation is important for understanding both the content and structure of the Book of Mormon.⁴³

Although Smith mentioned “the reception of the Holy Priesthood by the ministring of Angels” in his 1832 history, his narrative ended at the translation crisis. Thus no details about the reception of the priesthood were written at the time. However, in October 1834 Smith collaborated with scribe Oliver Cowdery in drafting an account of their receipt of “the holy priesthood” under the hand of an unnamed “angel of God.” According to Cowdery, this took place “after writing the account of the Savior’s ministry to the remnant of the seed of Jacob, upon this continent” (i.e., 3 Ne. 11–28), when it became clear that “none had authority from God to administer the ordinances of the gospel.”⁴⁴ Smith added details of this event in his 1838 history. On 15 May 1829, he explained, he and Cowdery “went into the woods to pray and inquire of the Lord respecting baptism for the remission of sins, that we found mentioned in the translation of the plates.” While they were praying, “a messenger from heaven,” who identified himself as John the Baptist, “descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us.” According to Smith, the words which the angel spoke were:

Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the Gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.⁴⁵

This heavenly messenger instructed Smith and Cowdery to baptize one another and to ordain one another to the “Aaronic Priesthood”—a dramatic fulfillment of Seeker expectations. Shortly after the visitation of John the Baptist, according to the 1838 history, Peter, James, and John appeared and ordained Smith and Cowdery to the “Priesthood of Melchizedek.”⁴⁶ However, Smith only gradually understood the exact nature of this restored authority (see chap. 5).

About 1 June 1829 David Whitmer came to Harmony, taking Smith and Cowdery to his father’s residence in Fayette, New York, to finish the Book of Mormon translation. Whitmer later reported that “the translation at my father’s occupied about one month, that is from June 1 to July 1, 1829.”⁴⁷ When the Book of Mormon finally rolled off the press of Egbert B. Grandin of

Palmyra in late March 1830, Abner Cole, editor of the *Palmyra Reflector*, understood that it "corresponded precisely with revelations made to, and predictions made by the elder Smith, a number of years before."⁴⁸ Meanwhile Smith was busy organizing the Church of Christ.

According to Cowdery, one of the final and most important instructions in the Book of Mormon included "the directions given to the Nephites, from the mouth of the Savior, of the precise manner in which men should build up his church."⁴⁹ In June 1829, Smith dictated a revelation instructing him and others to build up the church by following the pattern in the Book of Mormon (D&C 18:3-5, 30). When the "Church of Christ" was organized on 6 April 1830, it followed this pattern. Smith and Cowdery were first ordained apostles (D&C 21:1, 10-11; 20:2-3, 38), then they organized the church and ordained officers to minister to the members. This was also the pattern of church government for which the Seekers had waited (chap. 6).

In 1966, Catholic scholar Mario S. De Pillis argued that early Mormonism's success in gathering converts could best be explained by its unique authority claims. According to De Pillis, "the origin and whole doctrinal development of Mormonism under the Prophet may be characterized as a pragmatically successful quest for religious authority, a quest that he shared with many other anxious rural Americans of his time, class, and place." He concluded that "historians who do not take this quest seriously enough to examine it do not take Mormonism seriously enough for rigorous historical inquiry."⁵⁰

Early Mormon missionaries claimed to have exclusive authority from God. For instance, the *Painesville Telegraph* reported on 16 November 1830 that Oliver Cowdery "holds forth that the ordinances of the gospel have not been regularly administered since the days of the apostles till the said Smith and himself commenced the work." This declaration proved attractive, especially to Seekers in the Ohio Reserve.

In the fall of 1830, remembered early Mormon convert John Corry, Mormon missionaries from New York came to his neighborhood in Ashtabula, Ohio, and "professed to be special messengers of the Living God, sent to preach the Gospel in its purity, as it was anciently preached by the Apostles." They also said "they had with them a new revelation . . . translated from certain golden plates that had been deposited in a hill."⁵¹ The missionaries soon moved to Mentor and vicinity to preach to a group of

former Campbellites headed by Sidney Rigdon. Here the missionaries found a "prepared people" in what would become Mormonism's Sedbergh and eventually its Swarthmore Hall.

Rigdon⁵² had separated from Alexander Campbell over what Campbell described as Rigdon's belief that "supernatural gifts and miracles ought to be restored" along with the primitive gospel.⁵³ Rigdon believed the restoration of the "ancient order of things" should include such spiritual gifts as tongues, prophecy, visions, dreams, and discernment of spirits. Campbell, on the other hand, declared that such gifts were "confined to the apostolic age, and to only a portion of the saints who lived in that age."⁵⁴ Campbell also opposed Rigdon's plan to establish a communal society in Kirtland. Campbell remained uncommitted on the subject of the Millennium, but Rigdon was a strict millenarian who propounded his literalist views throughout the Western Reserve.⁵⁵ Because of these and other issues, Rigdon had withdrawn his Mentor congregation from Campbellite fellowship in the spring of 1830, only months before the Mormon missionaries arrived.

After careful thought, Rigdon finally announced to his congregation his belief that Mormonism was the restored gospel they were seeking. His congregation converted almost *en masse* to Mormonism. Soon, Rigdon traveled to Fayette, New York, to meet the Mormon prophet. In December 1830, Smith received a revelation for Rigdon. It touched on several points which had prompted Rigdon's separation from Campbellism:

Listen to the voice of the Lord your God . . . whose course is one eternal round, the same today as yesterday, and forever. . . . Behold, verily, verily, I say unto my servant Sidney, I have looked upon thee and thy works. I have heard thy prayers, and prepared thee for a greater work. Thou art blessed, for thou shalt do great things. Behold thou wast sent forth, even as John, to prepare the way before me, and before Elijah which should come, and thou knewest it not. Thou didst baptize by water unto repentance, but they received not the Holy Ghost. But now I give unto thee a commandment, that thou shalt baptize by water, and they shall receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, even as the apostles of old. . . . I will show miracles, signs, and wonders, unto all those who believe on my name. . . . The poor and the meek shall have the gospel preached unto them, and they shall be looking forth for the time of my coming, for it is nigh at hand (D&C 35:1, 3-6, 8, 15).

Like Rigdon, other Campbell followers, had sought a radical restoration which would include spiritual gifts. Lydia Partridge, a member of Rigdon's congregation, believed in spiritual gifts and converted to Mormonism because, she said, "I saw the gospel in its plainness as it was taught in the New Testament, and I also knew that none of the sects of the day taught those things."⁵⁶ Lydia's husband, Edward Partridge, shared her beliefs and had already concluded before the missionaries arrived that there was no true church on earth and that all "were without authority from God." He had further decided that it was "absolutely necessary" for God to "reveal himself to man and confer authority upon some one, or more, before his church could be built up in the last days, or any time after the apostacy."⁵⁷

John Murdock, a Campbellite minister living near Warrensville, Ohio, also concluded prior to the appearance of the Mormon elders that a divine restoration of authority was needed. "If they are out of the way as we believe," he said, "they have lost all authority." There was only one way God's authority could be restored: "The Lord must either send an angel to baptise the first man, or he must give a special command to some one man to baptise another."⁵⁸ Murdock was not unlike other Seekers who believed in the restoration of authority but were uncertain about how it would be done. His Seekerism led him to await an outward spiritual manifestation that the Mormon missionaries indeed possessed apostolic authority:

I said, if it be so, their walk will agree with their profession, and the Holy Ghost will attend their ministration of the ordinances, and the Book of Mormon will contain the same plan of salvation as the Bible. . . . I did not ask a sign of them by working a miracle . . . For I did not believe that the spirit would attend their ministration if the Book of Mormon was not true, neither if they were not sent forth of God.

When he questioned some of their converts, he found that the "manifestation of the spirit attended the ministration of the ordinance of laying on hands." After reading the Book of Mormon, Murdock recalled, "the spirit of the Lord rested on me, witnessing to me the truth of the work." On 5 November 1830, Murdock was baptized by Parley P. Pratt in the Chagrin River:

And the spirit of the Lord sensibly attended the ministration, and I came out of the water rejoicing and singing praises to God and the Lamb. An impression sensibly rested on my

mind that cannot by me be forgotten. . . . This was the third time that I had been immersed, but I never before felt the authority of the ordinance. But I felt it this time and felt as though my sins were forgiven.⁵⁹

As a child, Parley P. Pratt, one of Rigdon's converts, had been taught by his father "to venerate our Father in Heaven, Jesus Christ, His prophets and Apostles, as well as the Scriptures written by them." However, Pratt reported that his father "belonged to no religious sect, and was careful to preserve his children free from all prejudice in favor of or against any particular denomination, into which the so-called Christian world was then unhappily divided." At age eighteen Pratt joined the Baptists but felt uneasy about their denial of spiritual gifts. Later, in about 1827, he converted to Campbellism after hearing "the ancient gospel in due form" preached by Rigdon. Although Pratt believed Rigdon preached the true gospel in "form," he was concerned about the lack of spirit and authority:

But still one great link was wanting to complete the chain of the ancient order of things; and that was, the *authority* to minister in holy things—the apostleship, the power which should accompany the form. This thought occurred to me as soon as I heard Mr. Rigdon make proclamation of the gospel. . . . These Reformers [Campbell and Rigdon] claimed no new commission by revelation, or vision from the Lord, while they had not the least shadow of claim by succession.

"As none could claim the power, and authority, and gifts of the Holy Ghost—at least so far as we knew," Pratt joined the Campbellites, "thankful for even the forms of truth."⁶⁰ However, when he discovered in 1830 that the Mormon gospel fulfilled his expectations of the restored church, he was baptized. It was Pratt who directed the Mormon missionaries to Rigdon's group in Ohio.

Given that Seeker seeds had been sown by one as influential as Rigdon, it is not surprising that the preaching of the Mormon missionaries quickly bore fruit. Their success in Ohio profoundly effected the newly organized church. As Mark McKiernan has observed, "Rigdon's conversion and the missionary effort which followed transformed Mormonism from a New York-based sect with about a hundred members into one which was a major threat to Protestantism in the Western Reserve."⁶¹

Campbell was losing followers to the Mormon gospel, not because of the similarities but because of the differences. Mormonism attracted those who, as historian Jan Shipps notes, "followed Alexander Campbell into the Disciples of Christ [Campbellite] restoration and, shortly thereafter, found themselves to be the members of just one more Protestant denomination."⁶² Campbell found his followers moving toward a more radical kind of restoration that mirrored Seekerism elsewhere.

The Mormon gospel also attracted others of a similar disposition. Martin Harris said that in 1818 "the Spirit told me to join None of the churches for none had Authority from the Lord. . . . The Spirit told me that I might just as well plunge myself into the Water as to [let] eny of the Sects Baptise me so I Remained until the church Was organised by Joseph Smith the Prophet."⁶³ At age fifteen, Joel Hills Johnson "read the Bible with much attention, and joy would spring up in my heart with a testimony that the time would come when I should come in possession of . . . the faith once delivered to the Saints."⁶⁴ Wilford Woodruff would not join any church until his conversion to Mormonism in 1833 "for the reason that I could not find any denomination whose doctrines, faith and practice agreed with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, or the ordinances and gifts which the Apostles taught."⁶⁵ William Huntington withdrew from the Presbyterians in 1832 because he believed "they had a form of Godliness but denied the power thereof." He came to this conclusion after he had "searched the scriptures daily and found the faith once delivered to the Saints was not among men."⁶⁶ Solomon Chamberlain said that an angel told him "all Churches and Denominations on the earth had become corrupt; and no Church of God [was] on the earth but that he would shortly r[a]ise up a Church, that would never be confounded nor brought down and be like unto the Apostolic Church."⁶⁷

Mormon historian Marvin Hill identified many of those in the larger primitive gospel movement who were attracted to Mormonism's radical authority claims. He justifiably argues that "there were too many of the important leaders of early Mormonism who expressed allegiance to primitive gospelism before joining the Saints for it to be a matter of chance, or of no consequence."⁶⁸ Indeed, Joseph Smith quickly discovered the truth of the declaration, which appeared repeatedly in his early revelations: "Behold the field is white already to harvest" (D&C 4:4, 11:3, 12:3, 14:3).

Because of the similarity between Mormonism and some of the teachings of Alexander Campbell, some writers have suggested that Smith purloined his primitive gospel from the Campbellites via Sidney Rigdon.⁶⁹ This assertion suffers on several counts. First, it fails to recognize the differences between Campbell's and Rigdon's views. Second, Joseph Smith was exposed to Primitivism and Seekerism early in life through his parents and others. And third, Gospel Primitivism and Seekerism appeared in the Book of Mormon long before Rigdon came in contact with Mormonism. Thus Hill counters that the similarity between Mormons and Campbellites is because both groups "shared a common background and a common experience within the burgeoning pluralistic society that emerged in early nineteenth century America."⁷⁰

However, Rigdon did influence Mormonism after his baptism in November 1830. The revelation given through Smith in December 1830 defined Rigdon's role as follows: "Behold, it shall be given unto him [Smith] to prophesy; and thou shalt preach my gospel and call on the holy prophets [i.e., scriptures] to prove his words, as they shall be given him" (D&C 35:23).⁷¹ Smith was to receive revelation; Rigdon to interpret, defend, and elaborate on them. Moreover, the influx of Rigdon's followers and other Seekers provided the context within which Smith's definition of restoration would emerge (see chap. 5).

— NOTES —

1. In Russell E. Miller, *The Larger Hope: The First Century of the Universalist Church in America, 1770-1870* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist, 1979), 45-46.

2. [Solomon Mack], *A Narratve [sic] of the Life of Solomon Mack* (Windsor: Printed at the expense of the author, [1811]), esp. 19, 20-21.

3. Lucy [Mack] Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations* (Liverpool: S. W. Richards, 1853), 37.

4. Orsamus Turner reported that "the elder Smith had been a Universalist, and subsequently a Methodist." O. Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement of Phelps and Gorham's Purchase* (Rochester, 1851), 213. Tunbridge town records indicate that on 6 December 1797 Joseph Smith, along with his father, Asael, and brother Jesse, signed a declaration of membership in the local Universalist society. See Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Joseph Smith's New England Heritage: Influences of Grandfathers Solomon Mack and Asael Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 106, 207n185, 211n205.

5. See Anderson, *Joseph Smith's New England Heritage*, 105–106, 112, 207n183, 207n185.

6. Mary Audentia Smith Anderson, *Ancestry and Posterity of Joseph Smith and Emma Hale* (Independence, MO, 1929), 60.

7. The text and a facsimile of the letter can be found in Anderson, *Joseph Smith's New England Heritage*, 124–40; see also Anderson, *Ancestry and Posterity of Joseph Smith and Emma Hale*, 62–63.

8. The text and a facsimile of the letter can be found in Anderson, *Joseph Smith's New England Heritage*, 118–23; punctuation slightly adjusted.

9. John Smith Journal, in Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 155.

10. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 48.

11. See Marvin S. Hill, "A Note on Joseph Smith's First Vision and Its Import in the Shaping of Early Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 12 (Spring 1979): 92; and Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 38.

12. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 48.

13. *Ibid.*, 54.

14. *Ibid.*, 55–56.

15. *Ibid.*, 56–57.

16. *Ibid.*, 57–58.

17. *Ibid.*, 58–59. On "Babylon" as a reference to sectarian churches, see Hill, "Christian Primitivism," 50. Asa Wild had such an opinion, *Wayne Sentinel*, 22 Oct. 1823.

18. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 21, 52.

19. In Scott H. Faulring, ed., *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), 4–5.

20. Pomeroy Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism* (New York, 1867), 18.

21. Turner, *Phelps and Gorham's Purchase*, 214. Turner's mention of the meeting "on the Vienna road" may indicate a date sometime after 7 July 1821 since the Methodists did not acquire this property until then (Deeds of Ontario Co., Bk G, 345).

22. Joseph Smith, Jr., et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1964), 1:3, hereafter HC; cf. Dean C. Jessee, ed. and comp., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 198.

23. In his 1832 history, Smith said his first vision happened "in the 16th year of my age" (Faulring, *American Prophet's Record*, 5). But in his 1838 history, he said it was "in my fifteenth year . . . early in the spring of Eighteen hundred and twenty" (Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 198, 199).

24. Faulring, *American Prophet's Record*, 5–6.

25. I have followed Marvin Hill in giving priority to the 1832 version. See "The First Vision Controversy: A Critique and Reconciliation," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15 (Summer 1982): 31–46. My interpretation is similar to that of D. Michael Quinn, "From Sacred Grove to Sacral Power Structure," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 17 (Summer 1984), that "the Sacred Grove of Joseph Smith's experience did not

contain nor imply a church, a community, and certainly not an ecclesiastical hierarchy" (p. 10; also n3). That the first vision during the early years of the church was not considered a foundational experience to Mormonism, but rather a personal experience to Smith, is discussed in James B. Allen, "The Significance of Joseph Smith's 'First Vision' in Mormon Thought," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 1 (Autumn 1966): 29-45; James B. Allen, "Emergence of a Fundamental: The Expanding Role of Joseph Smith's First Vision in Mormon Religious Thought," *Journal of Mormon History* 7 (1980): 43-61; Neal E. Lambert and Richard H. Cracroft, "Literary Form and Historical Understanding: Joseph Smith's First Vision," *Journal of Mormon History* 7 (1980): 31-42; and Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 105.

26. In his 1832 history, Smith said his first Moroni visit occurred when he was "seventeen years of age . . . on the 22d day of Sept[ember] AD 1822" (Faulring, *American Prophet's Record*, 6). However, the date is incorrect and should read 1823, since Smith was only sixteen in September 1822. The 1838 history has the date as September 1823 (Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 202).

27. Faulring, *American Prophet's Record*, 6.

28. HC 1:11-13; cf. Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 203-205.

29. In the 1838 account Moroni is said to have quoted from Malachi 4:5 with a change that seems to foreshadow the restoration of the priesthood: "Behold I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet: before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." See HC 1:12. Like other additions to the early revelations referring to the priesthood, the above is an expansion and was evidently added to predict the appearance of Elijah in the Kirtland temple in 1836 (see D&C 110:13-16). If Moroni quoted this passage differently, one would expect Joseph to have included the change in his Inspired Version of the Bible. This was not the case, however, nor was the change included when Jesus quoted Malachi to the Nephites in the Book of Mormon (see 3 Ne. 25:5).

30. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 91; William Smith, interview with E. C. Briggs and J. W. Peterson, in *Deseret News*, 20 Jan. 1894.

31. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 90.

32. The records of the Palmyra Presbyterian church which would have given the exact date that the Smith family joined are missing. However, it is probable they joined sometime in 1824 or early 1825. Joseph Smith placed the conversion of his mother and the others during the Palmyra revival (HC 1:3). While there has been some debate about the dating of the Palmyra revival, the evidence clearly supports an 1824-25 dating. Resistance to this date comes from scholars wishing to preserve the historical accuracy of the 1838 history. I have given priority to the 1832 history, which is more contemporary and less institutionally developed, and which has no account of revivals. For this debate, see Wesley P. Walters, "New Light on Mormon Origins from the Palmyra Revival," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 4 (Spring 1969): 60-81, Richard L. Bushman's response in the same issue ("The First Vision Story Revived," 82-93), Walters's rejoinder ("A Reply to Dr. Bushman," 94-100); and Marvin S. Hill, "The First Vision Controversy," 31-46. Fortunately, the records for the termination of the Smiths' membership are extant and report that officials from the Palmyra Presbyterian church

visited the Smith home on 10 March 1830 to investigate their absence. The Smiths "acknowledged that they had entirely neglected the ordinances of the church for the last eighteen months and that they did not wish to unite with us anymore." See Stanley B. Kimball, "A Footnote to the Problem of Dating the First Vision," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 5 (Winter 1970): 121–23; and Milton V. Backman, Jr., and James B. Allen, "Membership of Certain of Joseph Smith's Family in the Western Presbyterian Church of Palmyra," *Brigham Young University Studies* 10 (Summer 1970): 482–84.

33. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 91.

34. Ibid. Others in Palmyra evidently shared Smith's opinion about the religious hypocrisy of the Presbyterians. About the same time a letter from an unnamed resident of Palmyra appeared in Buffalo's *Gospel Advocate* which expressed the same sentiment (see 9 Sept. 1825, 275). An accompanying editorial stated that "the Presbyterians in the state of New York have carried matters with such a high hand, and urged their claims with so much assurance, that a strong tide of feeling is beginning to set against them" (ibid.).

35. The Palmyra revival of 1816–17 is discussed in Walters, "New Light on Mormon Origins," 67. The revivals of 1819–20 are described in Milton V. Backman, *Joseph Smith's First Vision: Confirming Evidences and Contemporary Accounts*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 79–89. That Joseph Smith placed elements from the 1824 Palmyra revival in an 1820 setting was first suggested by Dale Morgan (*Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism: Correspondence and a New History*, ed. John Phillip Walker [Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986], 247–61) and by Wesley P. Walters ("New Light," 60–81). While not accepting all of Walters's conclusions, Marvin S. Hill recently conceded that elements of the 1824–25 revival, such as Lucy Smith and other family members joining the Presbyterian church, were placed by Joseph Smith in an 1820 setting. See "The First Vision Controversy," 31–46.

36. See, for example, testimonies in E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, OH: E. D. Howe, 1834), 232–69; Arthur B. Deming, *Naked Truths about Mormonism*, Jan. 1888, 21; Emily Blackman, *History of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1873), 577–82; W. D. Purple, "Joseph Smith, the Originator of Mormonism," *Chenango* (New York) *Union*, 2 May 1877; *History of Seneca Co. New York* (Philadelphia: Everts, Ensign & Everts, 1876), 129. Smith's involvement with treasure digging and folk magic is most fully described in D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987). See also Wesley P. Walters, "Joseph Smith's Bainbridge, N.Y., Court Trials," *Westminster Theological Journal* 36 (Winter 1974): 123–55, and "From Occult to Cult with Joseph Smith, Jr.," *Journal of Pastoral Practice* 1 (1977): 125; Marvin S. Hill, "Joseph Smith and the 1826 Trial: New Evidence and New Difficulties," *Brigham Young University Studies* 12 (Winter 1972): 223–33.

37. "Mormonism—No. 11," *Tiffany's Monthly* 5 (Aug. 1859): 164–65.

38. Dean C. Jessee, ed., "Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History," *Brigham Young University Studies* 17 (Autumn 1976): 32–33; Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 99.

39. *Tiffany's Monthly* 5 (Aug. 1859): 167; cf. Jessee, "Joseph Knight's Recollection," 33–34.

40. *Tiffany's Monthly* 5 (Aug. 1859): 169.

41. *A Book of Commandments, for the Government of the Church of Christ* (Zion [Independence, MO]: W. W. Phelps, 1833), 4:5. Hereafter cited in text as BofC.

42. Harris had begged Joseph to let him take part of the manuscript to Palmyra to show to his unbelieving wife, Lucy, and a few others. At first Joseph refused, but Martin persisted (HC 1:20–21). When Smith visited Palmyra several weeks later, he learned that Harris had lost the manuscript. Some time in July 1828 the solution to this crisis came in the form of revelation—Joseph's first—which assured him that "the works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught" (D&C 3:1). Another revelation followed (now D&C 10), which provided the badly needed solution: Joseph would translate another set of plates which covered the same period of ancient American history.

43. There may have been a "few more pages" dictated in about March 1829 (see D&C 5:30), but Smith did not start dictating again in earnest until the arrival of Cowdery in April 1829. That the first portion of the Book of Mormon was translated last is held by nearly every serious student of the book. See Hyrum L. Andrus, *God, Man, and the Universe* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), 90; Stanley R. Larson, "A Study of Some Textual Variations in the Book of Mormon Comparing the Original and the Printer's Manuscripts and the 1830, the 1837, and the 1840 Editions," Brigham Young University, M.A. thesis, 1974, 19–20; and Dean C. Jessee, "The Original Book of Mormon Manuscript," *Brigham Young University Studies* 10 (Spring 1970): 278.

44. *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (Oct. 1834): 15.

45. HC 1:39. Smith's version of the angel's words was first published in 1842 in the *Times and Seasons* 3 (11 Aug. 1842): 865–66. This was added to the Doctrine and Covenants in 1876, after Smith's death (see D&C 13).

46. HC 1:40. The visitation of Peter, James, and John and the restoration of the higher priesthood have received some attention, especially by those who have questioned its occurrence. See, for example, Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?*, 5th ed., rev. and enl. (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1987), 179–81. The traditional view is defended by Richard Lloyd Anderson in his "The Second Witness of Priesthood Restoration," *Improvement Era* (Sept. 1968), 15–16, 18, 20–22, 24. See also Larry C. Porter, "Dating the Restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood," *Ensign* 9 (June 1979): 5–10.

47. *Kansas City Daily Journal*, 5 June 1881. See also David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, MO, 1887), 30; and *Millennial Star* 43:421, where Whitmer reports that the translation was completed in June 1829.

48. *Palmyra Reflector* 2 (14 Feb. 1831): 101.

49. *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (Oct. 1834): 15.

50. Mario S. De Pillis, "The Quest for Religious Authority and the Rise of Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 1 (Spring 1966): 68–88.

51. John Corrill, *Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints, (Commonly Called Mormons;) Including an Account of Their Doctrine*

and Discipline; With the Reasons of the Author for Leaving the Church (St. Louis, 1839), 7.

52. On the life of Sidney Rigdon, see F. Mark McKiernan, *The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness: Sidney Rigdon, Religious Reformer, 1793-1876* ([Independence, MO]: Herald House, 1979).

53. Alexander Campbell, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell Embracing A View of the Origin, Progress and Principles of the Religious Reformation Which He Advocated*, Robert Richardson ed., 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1868), 2:346.

54. In Joseph W. White, "The Influence of Sidney Rigdon upon the Theology of Mormonism," M.A. thesis, University of Southern California, 1947, 127. See also Royal Humbert, ed., *A Compend of Alexander Campbell's Theology* (St. Louis, MO: Bethany Press, 1961), 67-70.

55. White, "Influence of Sidney Rigdon," 129; Amos S. Hayden, *Early History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve, Ohio: With Biographical Sketches of the Principal Agents in Their Religious Movement* (Cincinnati, 1876), 186.

56. Extracts from Lydia Partridge's Writings, Family History of Edward Partridge, Jr., 5, in Richard Lloyd Anderson, "The Impact of the First Preaching in Ohio," *Brigham Young University Studies* 11 (Summer 1971): 490.

57. Edward Partridge Papers, 26 May 1839, LDS church archives, in Milton V. Backman, Jr., "The Quest for a Restoration: The Birth of Mormonism in Ohio," *Brigham Young University Studies* 12 (Summer 1972): 362-63.

58. Journal of John Murdock, 9, in Backman, "Quest for a Restoration," 362.

59. John Murdock, *Autobiography*, 12, 15, 16, in Anderson, "Preaching in Ohio," 482-83.

60. Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt, Jr. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 19, 26, 31-32.

61. F. Mark McKiernan, "The Conversion of Sidney Rigdon to Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 5 (Summer 1970): 77.

62. Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 85.

63. Testimony of Martin Harris, 4 Sept. 1870, LDS church archives. See also Ronald W. Walker, "Martin Harris: Mormonism's Early Convert," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19 (Winter 1986): 33-34.

64. "Diary of Joel Hills Johnson, 1802-1882," 1:2-3, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

65. "History of Wilford Woodruff," *Millennial Star* 27 (March 1865): 167.

66. "Diaries of William Huntington," 1:2, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

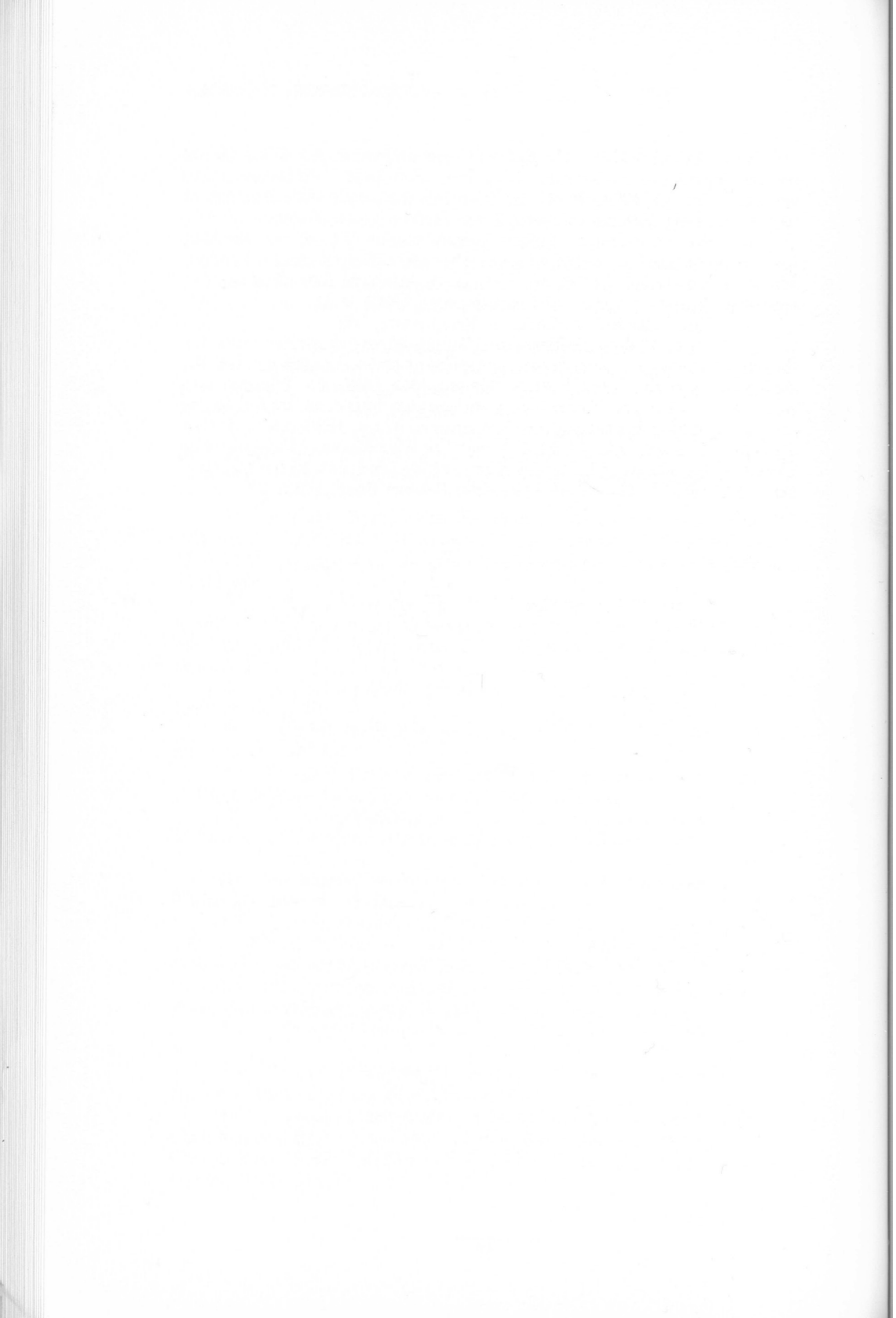
67. Solomon Chamberlain, "A Short Sketch of the Life of Solomon Chamberlain," Beaver City [Utah], 11 July 1858, in Larry C. Porter, "Solomon Chamberlain—Early Missionary," *Brigham Young University Studies* 12 (Spring 1972): 314-18.

68. Marvin S. Hill, "The Role of Christian Primitivism in the Origin and Development of the Mormon Kingdom, 1830-1844," Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1968, 59-60. Evidence for the primitivistic leanings of some of the early Mormon converts is provided on pages 56-59.

69. See, for example, William Alexander Linn, *The Story of the Mormons: From the Date of the Origin to the Year 1901* (New York and London: MacMillan Co., 1923), 64-65, and George B. Arbaugh, *Revelation in Mormonism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932), 9, 12.

70. Hill, "The Role of Christian Primitivism," 60.

71. David Whitmer believed that Sidney Rigdon was responsible for the introduction of the legal-lineal concept of priesthood authority. See *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, MO, 1887), 64. Whitmer also reported that Cowdery claimed to have been led into error by Rigdon in making changes in the revelations. See letter of 9 Dec. 1886 in *Saints' Herald* 34:93; cf. *Saints' Herald*, 54:230; and *Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1844*, eds. Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 29.



THE Apostasy

For early Mormons, apostasy from the primitive church was not just a matter of corrupt outward form but a loss of God's spirit and authority to perform ordinances. Oliver Cowdery proclaimed this radical view in the first issue of the *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*, a Mormon newspaper appearing in Kirtland, Ohio, four years after the organization of the new church. It was also in this inaugural issue that Cowdery published the first printed account of priesthood restoration through angels. "Have men authority to administer [ordinances] in the name of Christ, who deny revelations?" he asked in September 1834. The true church, Cowdery explained, is "based, built, and sustained by immediate revelations in all ages of the world."¹ Cowdery told readers that he intended to give a history of the ancient Christian church from its founding by Jesus Christ "till it lost its visibility on earth; was driven into darkness, or till God took the holy priesthood unto himself, where it has been held in reserve to the present century."²

Although the claim that the primitive Christian church fell into apostasy is as old as Luther's reformation, the Seeker concept radically differed from that of most other Protestants, including those in the primitive gospel movement in America. Because Seekers held a radical concept of religious authority, they saw the apostasy of the visible church as complete and total. The world was in a state of spiritual apostasy only God could remedy.

The European Reformers as well as the American Primitivists held a concept of apostasy which focused on outward corruption of the visible church—doctrines and formalities. Thus the church had been corrupted but not totally lost. The Primitivists especially did not see a need for the restoration of authority since

they believed the Bible contained all necessary authority for restoring the church.

In America the trends of liberal reformation were set with the publication in 1793 of Unitarian Joseph Priestley's three-volume work, *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*. In this influential work, Priestley meticulously detailed the outward corruption of the church and called for Christians to restore the church by purging it of false doctrines and practices.³

Alexander Campbell held such views. Although he believed that "all christian sects are more or less apostatized from the institutions of the Saviour," he did not believe in the total corruption of the visible church. According to Campbell, if all believers could agree on the Bible's authority in matters of doctrine and practice, strife and contention would end and order would be restored. Thus Campbell's call for unity contained no claim to exclusive authority.⁴ Thomas Campbell made it clear in 1831 that he believed the apostasy was limited to the outward corruption of the church and that he in no way believed in the concept of total apostasy.⁵

As early as 1590, Henry Barrowe had described the Seeker's concept of apostasy in his book *A Brief Discovery of the False Church*: "There are already those in England who teach that the Church of Rome is no true Church, its ordinations and sacraments are ineffective, its ministry is void, but the original seed of the Anglican Church received baptism and ordination from 'that false Church,' therefore they say that its ministries (the Anglican) and its baptisms are void and empty."⁶ Seekers applied this criticism to all churches. Ephraim Pagitt, an Anglican cleric and advocate of a presbyterian church government, reported in 1646 that the Seekers "deny that there is any true Church, or any true Minister, or any Ordinances."⁷

This position was stated even more clearly by William Erbery in 1648. Erbery, a spiritualistic Seeker and military chaplain, wrote that the apostasy had left the church in mystical Babylon, "since all the glory of the Gospel is gone, and all the gifts of the spirit constituting a Gospel Church are ceased."⁸ Erbery explicitly warned the English Baptist congregations: "You are not in a capacity to baptize or be baptized, there being no true Administrator, or a man sent of God with power from on high to baptize: First, because you have not the faith of the Gospel. Secondly, you are fallen from your first love, therefore the Apostacy is compleat and perfect and appears most visible in your Churches."⁹

This same concept was held by American Seekers, both before and after the Revolution. One of the "great Disputes among Gods people," Roger Williams wrote in 1652, is "whether [the] Apostles or Messengers sent out to teach and baptise, that is, to Convert the Nations, be yet an Ordinance of Christ Jesus continued, or being extraordinary ceased?" According to Williams, the effect of the apostasy had been the destruction of the apostolic church, "a totall Routing of the Church and Ministry of Christ Jesus. . . . The Apostolical Commission and ministrie is long since interrupted and discontinued."¹⁰ "The unknowing zeale of Constantine and other Emperours," Williams continued,

did more hurt to Christ Jesus his Crowne and Kingdome, then the raging fury of the most bloody Neroes. In the persecutions of the latter, Christians were sweet and fragrant, like spice pounded and beaten in morters: But those good Emperours, persecuting some erroneous persons, Arrius, &c. and advancing the professours of some Truths of Christ (for there was no small number of Truths lost in those times) and maintaining their Religion by the materiall Sword, I say by this meanes Christianity was eclipsed, and the Professors of it fell asleep, Cant. 5 [i.e., Song of Solomon 5]. Babel or confusion was usher'd in, and by degrees the Gardens of the Churches of Saints were turned into the wilderness of whole Nations, untill the whole World became Christian or Christendome, Revel. 12 & 13.¹¹

Asa Wild also spoke of the apostate condition of Christianity. Before Wild's conversion to Seekerism, God showed him that his belief in the "commandments and doctrines of men" had spiritually blinded him and that the Methodist church, to which he then belonged, was "so mixed and blended with darkness, error, and the traditions of men, that they . . . lead the enquiring soul away from the simplicity of the gospel." "I had felt," Wild wrote, "the burden of the *dead* church lying with great weight on my soul." Because of his exposure to Seekerism, he "beheld the church of God . . . lying in ruins." Finally, in 1823, God told Wild that "the present state of the professed church of Christ, is notoriously corrupt, and degenerated from the purity of primitive christianity; that every denomination, though there are hundreds in all, are involved in the same fatal darkness, and bondage, though not *all* in equal degree."¹² In another account of the same revelation—published in Amsterdam's *Mohawk Herald* and reprinted in Joseph Smith's community newspaper—Wild reported: "He also

told me, that every denomination of professing christians had become extremely corrupt; many of which had never had any *true* faith at all. . . . Furthermore he said that all the different denominations of professing christians, constituted the New Testament *Babylon*.”¹³

Wild's concept of apostasy extended beyond visible corruption. He criticized the churches for their lack of “*true* faith,” including spiritual gifts, and believed that latter-day restorers “will have higher authority, greater power, superior inspiration, and a greater degree of holiness, than was ever experienced before.”¹⁴ In the Seeker view, the apostasy was so complete that only a new divine dispensation of power could correct it.

The difference between Mormon and Campbellite concepts of apostasy became apparent on 4 February 1831 when Thomas Campbell wrote a letter to Sidney Rigdon denouncing the idea that Mormon converts were being rebaptized. He rejected as “anti-scriptural” the Mormon claim that “there has been none duly authorized to administer baptism, for the space of fourteen hundred years up to the present time, by showing that the church or the kingdom of Christ, must have been totally extinct during that period.” He reminded Rigdon that Jesus had promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against the church (Matt. 16:18).¹⁵

From his own study of the Bible, Joseph Smith concluded before age fourteen or fifteen that “mankind did not come unto the Lord but that they had apostatised from the true and living faith. There was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the New Testament.” In 1820 or 1821, Smith received a heavenly vision which confirmed his early convictions. According to Smith's earliest autobiography, Jesus declared to him: “Behold the world lieth in sin at this time and none doeth good, no not one. They have turned asside from the gospel and keep not my commandments. They draw near to me with their lips while their hearts are far from me.”¹⁶ Smith's later 1838 history is even more clearly Seeker, stressing abominable “creeds” and corrupt clergy who teach the “form of godliness” but “deny the power thereof.”¹⁷

The shifting emphasis between the two versions of Joseph Smith's story points to a larger change in his understanding of what the apostasy signified and what kind of authority was required for restoration. (The problems of religious authority are addressed in detail in chapter 5.) In general, charismatic or spiritual authority was emphasized less, in favor of lineal (i.e., chain

of ordination) or legal (i.e., institutional) authority. In 1834 Cowdery wrote that the apostasy occurred when “God took the holy priesthood unto himself.” Earlier Mormon descriptions of the apostasy lacked this concept of priesthood. Although Mormon descriptions of apostasy were always Seeker in tone—apostasy was complete and included loss of authority—the early emphasis was on spiritual apostasy and spiritual authority and only gradually became concerned with lineal-legal issues.

The Book of Mormon never connects the apostasy with a loss of lineal-legal priesthood. Apostasy in the Book of Mormon is always portrayed as religious hypocrisy, unbelief, and the loss of the spirit. In the first description of the latter-day churches Smith translated, Jesus Christ declares to the Nephites that prior to his Advent there “shall be a great and a marvelous work” (3 Ne. 21:9) when

all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, shall be done away. For it shall come to pass, saith the Father, that at that day whosoever will not repent and come unto my Beloved Son, them will I cut off from among my people, O house of Israel. . . . But if they will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob [the Indians] (3 Ne. 21:19–20, 22).

Jesus’ words, dictated just prior to the 15 May 1829 reception of authority (discussed in the previous chapter), are similar to the words in the revelation given the previous March (compare BofC 4:5). Jesus describes a spiritual apostasy without detailing a loss of authority through a contaminated line of priesthood ordination. This concept of apostasy is consistent throughout the rest of the Book of Mormon.

In the Book of Mormon, the New World prophet Moroni describes the condition of the churches in the day when the Book of Mormon would come “out of the earth . . . even as if one should speak from the dead” (Morm. 8:26):

It shall come in a day when the power of God shall be denied, and churches become defiled and be lifted up in the pride of their hearts; yea, even in a day when leaders of churches and teachers shall rise in the pride of their hearts, even to the envying of them who belong to their churches. . . . Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be churches built up that shall say: Come unto me, and for your money you shall

be forgiven of your sins. O ye wicked and perverse and stiff-necked people, why have ye built up churches unto yourselves to get gain? Why have ye transfigured the holy word of God, that ye might bring damnation upon your souls? . . . Ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquities; and your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts (8:28, 32–33, 36).

Moroni's statement that in the last days "the power of God shall be denied" cannot be construed as a reference to the loss of priesthood or to a break in the line of priesthood ordination as later Mormon conceptualizations of apostasy might suggest. "Power of God" is strictly spiritual, and its loss is attributed solely to spiritual pride, not to a break in the chain of ordination. Moroni makes clear what was to be denied when he states that his record "shall come in a day when it shall be said that miracles are done away" (8:26).

Moroni's view of the apostasy is clearer in subsequent passages. In his last exhortation, he states that "if the day cometh that the power and gifts of God shall be done away among you, it shall be because of unbelief. And wo be unto the children of men if this be the case; for there shall be none that doeth good among you, no not one. For if there be one among you that doeth good, he shall work by the power and gifts of God" (Moro. 10:24–25). Moroni explains that these spiritual gifts come through "the power of the Holy Ghost," without which no one can be saved (10:7, 17, 26). Here Moroni makes the statement, harmonious with Seeker theology, that spiritual gifts are the outward manifestations of saving grace at work within the church.

The first portion of the Book of Mormon, and the last to be translated—in June 1829—conforms to what has been said thus far about apostasy. The Book of Mormon prophet Nephi offers the following description of the latter-day Gentile churches:

The Gentiles are lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and have stumbled, because of the greatness of their stumbling block, that they have built up many churches; nevertheless, they put down the power and miracles of God, and preach up unto themselves their own wisdom and their own learning, that they may get gain and grind upon the face of the poor. And

there are many churches built up which cause envyings, and strifes, and malice (2 Ne. 26:20–21).

He again describes the churches at the time of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon:

For it shall come to pass in that day that the churches which are built up, and not unto the Lord, when the one shall say unto the other: Behold, I, I am the Lord's; and the others shall say: I, I am the Lord's; and thus shall every one say that hath built up churches, and not unto the Lord—and they shall contend one with another; and their priests shall contend one with another, and they shall teach with their learning, and deny the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance. And they deny the power of God, the Holy One of Israel; and they say unto the people: Harken unto us, and hear ye our precept; for behold there is no God today, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done his work, and he hath given his power unto men; behold, hearken ye unto my precept; if they shall say there is a miracle wrought by the hand of the Lord, believe it not; for this day he is not a God of miracles; he hath done his work (2 Ne. 28:3–6).

Nephi thus condemns the latter-day clergy for their lack of spiritual endowment, not their lack of priesthood authority. "Because of pride, and because of false teachers, and false doctrine," Nephi continues, "their churches have become corrupted" (2 Ne. 28:11–12). The false doctrine that especially concerns Nephi is the teaching that God is no longer a God of miracles. Miracles have ceased because the churches lack faith and have lost the spirit, both necessary requirements for salvation. Repentance and water baptism are only the "gate," but actual remission of sins comes only through reception of the Spirit (31:17). After water baptism "cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost; and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels" (31:13). "This is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine," and those who teach otherwise do so at the peril of their salvation (31:21).

The Book of Mormon's description of apostasy, which consistently emphasizes religious hypocrisy and the loss of God's spirit, has profound implications for the early Mormon concept of authority. At this early phase of development, neither Joseph Smith nor Oliver Cowdery had reason to interpret their reception of authority in a lineal-legal context. Rather, they emphasized its

charismatic qualities. Nevertheless, the early Mormon description of apostasy, its emphasis on the loss of the spirit and accompanying outward manifestations, was purely literalistic Seeker.

The literalistic Seekers' sense of the apostasy can be seen in their interpretation of one biblical image. Both Puritans and Seekers were inspired by the image of the "church in the wilderness," which they derived from Revelation and Canticles. "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days" (Rev. 12:6). "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness . . . fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" (Cant. 3:6, 5:10). Although Puritans and Seekers used the symbol of the "church in the wilderness," each interpreted it differently.¹⁸

Jonathan Winthrop and others saw in the New World a unique opportunity to put their Puritan ideals into practice unhampered by the monolithic institutions of Europe and England. Once in New England, the Puritans believed it was their divine obligation to convert the Indians, to build a holy society, and to establish and maintain a pure church. The phrase which captured New England's sense of mission was popularized in Samuel Danforth's 11 May 1670 election day sermon: *A Brief Recognition of New England's Errand into the Wilderness*.¹⁹

The wilderness was also seen as a place of refuge for the church. Because "all other Churches of Europe are brought to desolation," Winthrop said, "the church hath noe place left to flie into but the wilderness."²⁰ "God doth sometime[s] raise up a Church out of a wilderness," maintained John Cotton, "to take us aside from disturbances, and temptations in populous Cities."²¹ God willing, the Puritans would create a "garden" in the midst of the "wilderness," where their theocracy could flourish. In 1674, despite the perceived spiritual decline of New England's youth, Increase Mather declared that God "hath turned this Wilderness into a Canaan, and here hath he given us Rest."²² His son Cotton wrote in 1690 that the Puritan effort in New England had produced the Lord's "Almost only Garden . . . in the vast continent of America."²³

The wilderness was not only an empty place to which the church was to flee but also full of temptations and trials for testing and purifying the church. Many Puritans came to cherish the "Wilderness-condition" of their church, where they could prove their faith. Cotton Mather affirmed, "a wilderness was a place

where temptation was to be met withal."²⁴ Elsewhere Mather wrote that when "the Church . . . fled into this Wilderness, [it] immediately found, The Serpent cast out of his Mouth a Flood for the carrying of it away [Rev. 12:6, 12]."²⁵ "God hath led us into a wilderness . . . because he loved us," declared Increase Mather in 1669. "Who knoweth but that he may send down his spirit upon us here, if we continue faithful before him"?²⁶

The image of the church fleeing into the wilderness in order to purify itself was used repeatedly by Puritan ministers. Jonathan Mitchel of Cambridge reminded a group of Boston Puritans in 1667 that "it is our Errand into the Wilderness to study and practice true Scripture Reformation."²⁷ John Higginson in his 1663 election day sermon, *The Cause of God and His People in New England*, said, "when the Lord stirred up the spirits of so many of his people to come over into this wilderness, it was not for worldly wealth, or a better livelyhood here for the outward man," but rather for "Reformation of Religion according to God's word."²⁸ "You have solemnly professed before God, Angels and Men," Samuel Danforth reminded his listeners in 1671, that you came to "this waste and howling Wilderness" to worship God in purity and holiness.²⁹ When it became apparent that New England's second generation was slipping into spiritual decline, the leading elders charged in 1671 that the backsliders were "turning the pleasant gardens of Christ into a wilderness."³⁰ Five years later Increase Mather lamented that the younger generation had "in great part forgotten our *Errand* in this Wilderness."³¹

The Puritans believed they *were* the church in the wilderness, but the Seekers sought the true church in the "wilderness" of apostasy. For Seekers the wilderness became the symbol for the complete apostasy of the visible church. Both literalistic and spiritualistic Seekers spoke of the church in the wilderness. In 1646, Ephraim Pagitt reported that some English Seekers had declared the church to be "in the wilderness" and that they were seeking it. Other Seekers, Pagitt continued, "say that it [the church] is in the smoak of the Temple,"³² undoubtedly a reference to spiritualistic Seekers, whose beliefs were defended in John Saltmarsh's *Smoke in the Temple* (1646). Spiritualistic Seekers William Erbery and Henry Vane also spoke of the "Church in the Wilderness."³³

Roger Williams disputed the Puritan claim that they constituted the church in the wilderness. He argued that the church was in the wilderness of apostasy, not the wilderness of America,

and debated the point with John Cotton.³⁴ Because of the apostasy, Williams argued, "the Church and Ministry of Christ Jesus, [was] put to flight, and retired into the Wildernesse of Desolation."³⁵ Williams looked forward to the church's "coming out of the Babylonian Apostacy & Wilderness."³⁶ In 1659 George Fox declared that "the despised People of the LORD called QUAKERS" are "of the Seed of that Woman, who hath been long fled into the WILDERNESS."³⁷

In October 1830, shortly after the organization of his Church of Christ, Joseph Smith dictated a revelation in which God declared: "this church have I established and called forth out of the wilderness" (D&C 33:5). Two years later, while revising Revelation 12, Smith clearly identified the woman in the wilderness as "the church of God" and changed the reference about 1260 days to "years" (Rev. 12:5, 7, Inspired Version). Another revelation in 1832 explained that the "whore, even Babylon" drove the ancient "church into the wilderness" (D&C 86:3). When Smith revised one of his early revelations in 1835, he made it reflect the Seeker sense of the church in the wilderness. Instead of declaring a "reformation" of the churches, the altered revelation announced that Mormonism was "the beginning of the rising up and the coming forth of my church out of the wilderness [Cant. 3:6]—clear as the moon, and fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners [Cant. 6:10]" (D&C 5:14; BofC 4:5). At the dedication of the Kirtland temple on 27 March 1836, Smith prayed that "the church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (D&C 109:73). Echoed here was a Seeker concept of the church in the wilderness.

Notions about apostasy were closely intertwined with opinions about the Catholic church. The Book of Mormon proclaimed that all churches had "gone out of the way" (2 Ne. 28:11) and particularly singled out the Catholic church as the "most abominable above all other churches" (1 Ne. 13:5; cf. v. 26). At first glance, this seemed little more than a typical Protestant denunciation of Catholicism.

Although the Book of Mormon appeared years before the high point of American anti-Catholicism, when convents were burned in Boston and New York, anti-Catholic sentiment had existed from the early days of colonization. The Puritans had left England when bitterness against Catholics was at its peak there.

Catholicism was not only a competing theology but a force plotting with France and Spain to overthrow the English government—a civic as well as a religious concern.³⁸

Anti-Catholicism, mingled with concerns about apostasy, was as old as the Reformation. Luther himself, in an introduction to Robert Barnes's *History of the Popes* in 1536, said that "all who have the spirit of Christ know well that they can bring no higher or more acceptable praise offering to God than all they can say or write against this bloodthirsty, unclean, blasphemic whore of the devil."³⁹ But the establishment of English Protestantism under Henry VIII and subsequent intrigues to place a Catholic on the throne were more immediate influences on seventeenth-century anti-Catholic sentiment.

Few Catholics were in the colonies during the seventeenth century, but by 1790 the Irish were immigrating in significant numbers to Boston, New York, and Philadelphia; and Catholics were also centering in Maryland and Pennsylvania. Nearly all of the colonies had legal sanctions against Catholics.⁴⁰ The Puritans tried to prevent the introduction of Romish influences by excluding all Irish from entering the colony and by instituting oaths of allegiance which denounced the Pope.⁴¹

The Quebec Act of 1774, a measure designed to extend religious toleration to the Catholics in Quebec and to include in that province the French settlers of the Ohio territory, aroused strong colonial opposition. Americans accused the crown of secretly plotting with Rome to establish Popery on their borders. "We may live," one editorialist declared, "to see our churches converted into mass houses and our lands plundered by tythes for the support of the Popish clergy. The Inquisition may erect her standard in Pennsylvania and the city of Philadelphia may yet experience the carnage of St. Bartholomew's Day."⁴² One pamphleteer warned: "If Gallic Papists have a right/ To worship their own way/ Then farewell to the Liberties,/ Of poor America."⁴³ John Trumbull believed that England "Struck bargains with the Romish churches/ Infallibility to purchase;/ Set wide for Popery the door,/ Made friends with Babel's scarlet whore."⁴⁴

Between the adoption of the federal constitution in 1787 and 1820, a spirit of liberalism led many states to change anti-Catholic laws. Vermont began the trend in 1786 by dropping an anti-Catholic clause in its constitution, South Carolina followed in 1790, New Hampshire in 1792, and New York removed its oath against Catholics in 1822. But from 1820 to 1829, anti-Catholicism

again increased and the "No-Popery crusade" took real form. Some historians have blamed large-scale foreign immigration for this Protestant reaction. The influx of immigrants, especially Irish, did bring unprecedented growth for the Catholic church. In 1807 there were 70,000 Catholics in the United States. By 1830 the number had increased to 600,000.⁴⁵

During the Papal Jubilee of Leo XII in 1827, Catholics made a bid for new converts. In October 1829, the first Provincial Council of Catholicity in America, which met in Baltimore, recommended native rather than foreign bishops. Protestants saw these developments as signs of the Catholic church's growing strength in America. One editor called the Baltimore gathering a "singular specimen of papal authority exercised over the people of a free country."⁴⁶

In Adam Clarke's popular nineteenth-century commentary on the Bible, Revelation's description of the "great whore that sitteth upon many waters" was explained as a reference "no doubt" to the "Latin Church." Commenting on the whore's wealth, Clarke wrote that it "strikingly represents the most pompous and costly manner in which the Latin Church has held forth to the nations the rites and ceremonies of its idolatrous and corrupt worship."⁴⁷ Clarke's commentary on Revelation was reproduced in Josiah Priest's *View of the Expected Christian Millennium* published in Albany, New York, in 1828.⁴⁸ Charles Crawford, in his 1783 poem *The Christian*, referred to the Pope as "the man of sin" and to the Roman church as "the whore."⁴⁹ The *New York Telescope* in 1825 stated, "our clergy call the church of Rome 'Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.'"⁵⁰ In 1835, Joseph Smith's scribe, Oliver Cowdery, mentioned that the Baptists, Presbyterians, and others referred to the Catholic church as "the Beast."⁵¹

It is thus not surprising that in the Book of Mormon Nephi sees in vision, "the foundation of a great church . . . which is most abominable above all other churches" (1 Ne. 13:4-5). Nephi, six hundred years before John the Revelator, labels this church with the epithets the book of Revelation would apply to the apocalyptic woman: "great and abominable" (13:6/ Rev. 17:5), "mother of harlots" (13:34, 14:16, 17/ Rev. 17:5), and "whore of all the earth" (14:10, 11, 12/ Rev. 17:1). Nephi also describes the whore's gold, silver, silks, scarlets, fine-twined linen, all manner of precious clothing, and daughter harlots, which he says are "the desires of this great and abominable church" (13:7-8/ Rev. 17:4-5).⁵²

Because the Book of Mormon singles out the Catholic church as the "most abominable above all other churches" (1 Ne. 13:5; cf. v. 26), one might conclude that the Book of Mormon's description of this church is typically Protestant. But the Book of Mormon surprises readers when it concludes its description of the "mother of harlots" with a Seeker twist. According to Seekers, Protestants were as corrupt as Catholics. Asa Wild, for example, proclaimed that "all the different denominations of professing christians, constituted the New Testament *Babylon* . . . this mother of harlots."⁵³ Solomon Chamberlain, a Seeker who was one of the first converts to Mormonism, soon after an 1816 vision proclaimed that "all denominations on earth were as John said constituted the great whore of all the earth."⁵⁴ Quakers, too, retained the Seeker attitude by branding all opponents "the Great Whore."⁵⁵

Mormons held the same view. In 1841, Mormon apostle Parley P. Pratt commented that although the Protestants call the Catholic church the "mother of harlots" and believe her to be in a state of apostasy, still, they draw their authority from her.⁵⁶ In 1845, Mormon apostle John Taylor wrote that "the old church is the mother [of harlots] and the protestants are the lewd daughters."⁵⁷ Roger Williams believed that the Church of England was "a daughter . . . of the great whore of Rome," which aided the papist cause by also persecuting God's saints.⁵⁸

So also, in the Book of Mormon, after describing the Catholic church as the "most abominable above all other churches," Nephi writes, "and I saw many harlots" (1 Ne. 13:5, 7). He then elaborates along Seeker theology: "There are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations; and she is the whore of all the earth" (1 Ne. 14:10).

Mormons believed that the worst sin of the mother church was complicity in the alteration of the Bible. "They have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious," Nephi learns in the Book of Mormon. This was done "that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men" (1 Ne. 13:26-27). Because of the altered condition of the Bible, "an exceeding great many" of the Gentiles "do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them" (13:29).⁵⁹

Seeker doubts about scripture were identical to the Mormon position. Seekers renounced scripture as a sure means of salvation because they believed that "the original manuscripts have been lost."⁶⁰ Anglican Richard Baxter reported that the Seekers "taught that our Scripture was uncertain" and that "true" Scripture was "lost."⁶¹ This concept of scripture was retained by the Seekers who converted to Quakerism.⁶² Hence Protestants believed the Seekers were "anti-scripturalists." "Seekers," Baxter wrote in 1660, "are questioning all things, and endeavouring to disparage the holy Scriptures."⁶³ The Protestant position was best illustrated by Adam Clarke's own confidence in the extant manuscripts and in his criticisms of the Catholic church based on his reading of the Bible.⁶⁴

Thus the Seeker and Mormon concepts of apostasy are to be distinguished from the position held by other Primitivists. For Seekers and early Mormons, contemporary sectarian strife and theological debate underscored the completeness of the apostasy from Jesus Christ's original church and intensified the need for a restoration.

— NOTES —

1. Oliver Cowdery to William W. Phelps, 7 Sept. 1834, in *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (Oct. 1834): 15.

2. *Ibid.*, Nov. 1834, 28.

3. Joseph Priestley, *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 2 vols., 3rd ed. (Boston, 1797), see esp. 1:iii, ix, 97, 161-69; 2:3-5, 97.

4. *Christian Baptist* 4 (6 Nov. 1826): 89. For Campbell's views on apostasy and restoration, see James DeForest Murch, *Christians Only: A History of the Restoration Movement* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1962), 9-18, 35-52, 67-81, 109-21; Winfred Ernest Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ: A History* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1948), 124-79; Robert Richardson, ed., *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 2 vols. (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1897-98), 1:236-46, 349, 2:150-54, 517-24; and Nathan O. Hatch, "The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People," *Church History* 67 (Dec. 1980): 545-67. On the tension between the concepts of restoration and unity, see George Hugh Wilson, "Unity and Restoration in the Ecumenical Thought of the Disciples of Christ: With Special Reference to the Disciples' Part in the Evolution of the World Council of Churches," Ph.D. Diss., Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1962.

5. Thomas Campbell to Sidney Rigdon, 4 Feb. 1831, in E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled [sic]; or, A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, from Its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, OH: E. D. Howe, 1834), 121.

6. In Rufus M. Jones, *Mysticism and Democracy in the English Commonwealth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932), 67.

7. E[phraim] Pagitt, *Heresiography; or, A description of the Hereticks and Sectaries of these latter times*, 3d ed. (London, 1646), 150.

8. William Erbery, *The Lord of Hosts* (London, 1648), 30; see also William Erbery, *The General Epistle to the Hebrews* (London, 1652), 1-4.

9. William Erbery, *A Call to the Churches* (London, 1653), 3; see also 10-11.

10. Roger Williams, *The Hireling Ministry None of Christs* (London, 1652), 20, 2, and unpaginated page at beginning under heading "In this Discourse are briefly touched these Particulars."

11. [Roger Williams], *The Bloudy Tenent* ([London], 1644), section headed "A Reply to the aforesaid Answer of Mr. Cotton," chap. lxiv, 95.

12. [Asa Wild], *A Short Sketch of the Religious Experience, and Spiritual Travels, of Asa Wild, of Amsterdam, N. Y. Written by himself, by Divine Command, and the most infallible Inspiration* (Amsterdam, NY: printed for the author by D. Wells, 1824), 43-44, 53, 54, 78. This revelation was originally published in 1823 in the *Mohawk Herald* (Amsterdam, NY).

13. *Wayne Sentinel*, 22 Oct. 1823.

14. *Ibid.* Cf. Wild, *Short Sketch*, 79.

15. Thomas Campbell to Sidney Rigdon, 4 Feb. 1831, in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 121. The same argument from Matt. 16:18 was used by William Allen against Seeker claims of complete apostasy. See *A Doubt Resolved, or Satisfaction for the Seekers* (London, 1655), 16.

16. In Scott H. Faulring, *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), 5, 6.

17. Joseph Smith, Jr., et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News: 1964), 1:6. Cf. Dean C. Jessee, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 200.

18. For a discussion of the varying interpretations of the "church in the wilderness," including those held by Puritans, Seekers, and Mormons, see George Huntston Williams, "The Wilderness and Paradise in the History of the Church," *Church History* 28 (Mar. 1959): 3-24. See also James A. Vendettuoli, "The English Seekers: John Jackson, the Principal Spokesman," Ph.D. diss., Harvary University, 1958, 201-17.

19. On the Puritan concept of an "errand into the wilderness," see Sacvan Bercovitch, "The Historiography of Johnson's *Wonder Working Providences*," *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 104 (1968): 138-61, and "Horologicals to Chronometricals: The Rhetoric of the Jeremiad," *Literary Monographs*, Eric Rothstein ed., vol. 3 (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), esp. 3-26; Kenneth B. Murdock, "Clio in the Wilderness: History and Biography in Puritan New England," *Church History* 24 (1955): 221-38, revised and reprinted in *Early American Literature* 6 (Winter 1971-72): 201-19, and "William Hubbard and the Providential Interpretation of History," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 52 (1942): 15-37; Peter N. Carroll, *Puritanism and the Wilderness: The Intellectual Significance of the New England Frontier, 1629-1700* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969); Alan Heimert, "Puritanism, the Wilderness, and the Frontier," *New England Quarterly* 26 (Sept. 1953): 361-82; and Perry Miller,

The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Boston: Beacon Press, 1953; reprinted 1966), 1-39, and *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1956), 1-15.

20. Jonathan Winthrop, "Reasons To Be Considered," *Winthrop Papers*, 5 vols. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), 2:138-39.

21. John Cotton, *A Brief Exposition with Practical Observations upon the Whole Book of Canticles* (London, 1655), 71. Cotton is commenting on Solomon's Song 3:6, "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness." Peter Bulkeley also expressed the same idea in *Gospel Covenant* (London, 1646), 305.

22. Increase Mather, "To The Reader," in Samuel Torrey, *An Exhortation unto Reformation* (Cambridge [MA], 1674).

23. Cotton Mather, *The Present State of New-England* (Boston, 1690), 37.

24. Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, 3 vols. (Hartford, 1820), 2:67.

25. Cotton Mather, *The Wonders of the Invisible World* (Boston, 1693), 5b.

26. Increase Mather, *The Mystery of Israel's Salvation Explained and Applied* (Cambridge [MA], 1669), 163-64.

27. Jonathan Mitchel, *Nehemiah on the Wall* (Cambridge, [MA], 1671), 28.

28. John Higginson, *The Cause of God and His People in New England* (Cambridge, [MA], 1663), 10-12.

29. Samuel Danforth, *A Briefe Recognition of New England's Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge [MA], 1671), 9-10.

30. Letter of the Elders to the General Court of Massachusetts Bay, 31 May 1671, in *Records of Massachusetts Bay*, Vol. 4, pt. 2, 490.

31. Increase Mather, *An Earnest Exhortation to the Inhabitants of New England* (Boston, 1676), 16-17.

32. Pagitt, *Heresiography*, 150.

33. William Erbery, *The General Epistle to the Hebrews* (London, 1652), 1, 3; Henry Vane, *Two Treatises* (n.p., 1662), 1-2, 45.

34. For background on the Williams-Cotton exchange, see Sacvan Bercovitch, "Typology in Puritan New England: The Williams-Cotton Controversy Reassessed," *American Quarterly* 19 (Summer 1967): 166-91.

35. Williams, *Hireling Ministry*, 2. For Cotton's differing interpretation on this point, see John Cotton, *The Bloudy Tenent, Washed . . . Whereunto is added a Reply to Mr. Williams Answer to Mr. Cottons Letter* (London, 1647), 45.

36. R[oger] W[illiams], *George Fox Digg'd Out of His Burrowes* (Boston, 1676), 66.

37. From the title page of George Fox's *The Great Mistry of the Great Whore Unfolded* (London, 1659). See also George Fox, *A Journal*, ed. Margaret Fox (London, 1694), 115-16.

38. On anti-Catholicism in early America, see Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1963); Thomas T. McAvoy, *A History of the Catholic Church in the United States* (Notre Dame: Univeristy of Notre Dame Press, 1969), esp. 123-34; David Brion Davis, "Some Themes

of Counter-Subversion: An Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Catholic, and Anti-Mormon Literature," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 47 (Sept. 1960): 205-24; and Theodore M. Hammett, "Two Mobs of Jacksonian Boston: Ideology and Interest," *Journal of American History* 62 (March 1976): 845-68.

39. In Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 2-3.

40. See Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 8-9.

41. *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England, 1628-1686* (Boston, 1853-54), 3:291, 294, 5:193-94.

42. *Pennsylvania Packet*, 31 Oct. 1774.

43. In Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 17; see also *A Full Vindication of Measures of Congress from Calumnies of their Enemies* (New York, 1774), 26.

44. *American Museum*, 1:313, in Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 19.

45. See Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 22-23, 32-37, and McAvoy, *History of the Catholic Church*, 133.

46. *The Philadelphian*, in the *New York Observer*, 28 June 1829.

47. Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 7 vols. (n.p., 1810), 7:1036-37.

48. Josiah Priest, *A View of the Expected Christian Millennium* (Albany, 1828), esp. 126-27.

49. Charles Crawford, *The Christian: A Poem, in Four Books* (Philadelphia, 1783), xxiv-v.

50. *New York Telescope* 1 (12 March 1825): 161.

51. *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (April 1835): 104.

52. According to both Nephi and the Revelator, the "many waters" which the whore sits upon represents her "dominion of all the earth, among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people" (14:11, 12/ Rev. 17:1, 15). Commenting on Revelation's woman "drunken with the blood of the saints," Clarke said it refers to "the cruelties exercised by the Latin Church against all its has denominated heretics." See Clarke, *The Holy Bible*, 7:1036-37. In 1835, Oliver Cowdery remarked that "the Catholic church has cruelly tortured many of its dissenters, and we have no doubt, but that in a coming day, the innocent blood of thousands will be brought up as a charge against some of its former members." *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (April 1835): 107. Roger Williams believed that "the bloody storme of the slaughter of the Witnesses, is yet to be expected and prepared for" before the fullness of the Gentiles comes in. See Williams, *Hireling Ministry*, 21.

53. *Wayne Sentinel*, 22 Oct. 1823.

54. In Dean C. Jessee, ed., "The John Taylor Nauvoo Journal: January 1845-September 1845," *Brigham Young University Studies* 23 (Summer 1983):45.

55. See the title page of George Fox's *The Great Mystery of the Great Whore Unfolded* (London, 1659). See also Fox, *Journal*, 115.

56. *Millennial Star* 1 (Jan. 1841): 236.

57. *Times and Seasons* 6 (15 Feb. 1845): 811. See also Taylor's comment in Faulring, *American Prophet's Record*, 358.

58. In John Garrett, *Roger Williams: Witness Beyond Christendom, 1603-1683* (London: Macmillan Co., 1970), 60.

59. In 1832, William W. Phelps, editor of the first Mormon newspaper, identified this wicked church with the Catholic church: "It will be seen

by this that the most plain parts of the New Testament have been taken from it by the Mother of Harlots while it was confined in that Church,—say, from the year A.D. 460 to 1400.” See *Evening and Morning Star*, June 1832.

60. “Seekers,” *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (1908–14), 10:235; see also M. J. Havran, “Seekers,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 17 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967), 13:47.

61. [Richard Baxter], *Reliquiae Baxterianae: or, Mr. Richard Baxter’s Narrative of the Most Memorable Passages of His Life and Times*, ed. Matthew Sylvester (London, 1696), 76.

62. Fox, *Journal*, 89, 102, 203, 264, 359, 397.

63. Richard Baxter, *The Successive Visibility of the Church of which the Protestants are the soundest Members* (London, 1660), 27.

64. See, for example, Clarke, *The Holy Bible*, 1:403.

THE “Doctrines of Devils”

Dismayed by the multifariousness of competing religious doctrines, Joseph Smith found such diversity evidence of the apostasy from Jesus' original church. Seekers shared this conviction and, like the Mormons, also came to criticize what they saw as the overly intellectual and “heartless” doctrines of Calvinism which had come to America with the Puritans.

Calvinism originated with French reformer John Calvin (originally Jean Cauvin, 1509–64) and his doctrines elaborated in *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536). Puritans in England and America embraced what had come to be known as the five points of Calvinism: (1) unconditional election—those who are saved are chosen by God and in no way earn salvation through “works”; (2) limited atonement—Jesus' death saves some but not all people; (3) total depravity—humankind is by nature corrupt; (4) irresistible grace—regeneration is a gift from God; and (5) the final perseverance of the saints—once a person is saved he or she will never fall from grace. “Not man, but God alone is the author of Regeneration,” Increase Mather insisted in 1684, “so men are altogether passive in their Conversion, and the Eternal Spirit is the only principal Agent therein.”¹

Maryland was the only seventeenth-century colony in the New World with a substantial number of Catholics. The remaining colonies were overwhelmingly Protestant and, except for a handful of German Lutherans, predominantly Calvinist. But Calvinism in America began to decline in the mid-1600s as the Puritan oligarchy gave way to the economic interests of New England's second generation, which found the extreme Calvinism of their parents a hinderance to economic growth.² By the beginning of the nineteenth century, most Calvinist churches had splintered under pressure of theological controversy.

Arminian theology, which stressed one's freedom to choose between good and evil and emphasized humankind's role in their own salvation, presented a persistent challenge to Calvinist thinking. Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609), a Dutch theologian, challenged all five points of Calvinism. Some leaders of the Church of England, under the direction of Archbishop Laud (1573–1645), embraced Arminianism and were immediately criticized by English Puritans.³

Post-Revolutionary Primitivists participated in the rejection of Calvinism. Abner Jones withdrew from the Calvinistic Baptists because he could not accept the doctrine of election.⁴ Elias Smith also doubted the doctrine of election and withdrew from the Baptists, founding "The Christian Connexion" in 1803.⁵ The emotional conversions of the Kentucky camp meetings caused Barton W. Stone to pursue further his own doubts about election.⁶ Alexander Campbell liked to see himself as neither Calvinist nor Arminian, but his position was fundamentally Arminian.⁷

Earlier Seekers had been Calvinists. Roger Williams, for example, attacked the Quakers for accepting the Arminian concept of universal atonement. Later Seekers struggled with these issues. Asa Wild's turmoil because of his Calvinist upbringing is particularly instructive. From an early age Wild desired to be forgiven of his sins and to be "renewed by the power and grace of God." But he resisted these spiritual promptings and "went on carelessly in sin and disobedience." His parents had taught him that anything one did before conversion was "only an abomination in the sight of God; at least, that our most sincere service could not be accepted by Him, because it does not spring from holy love or a new heart." He had been taught to believe that "all the prayers, tears, repentance, reformation and obedience of an unconverted person, would not render it any more probable that God would convert his soul, than though he was destitute of them, and going on in thoughtlessness and sin." The doctrine of "unconditional election," Wild reported, was "the sentiment of the greater part of the Calvinists in the New England States, and of some in the State of New York."⁸

The doctrines of Calvinism left Wild spiritually discouraged. He later confessed that at the age of twenty-two he had become "one of the greatest adepts in wickedness," but he struggled with guilt: "I saw myself guilty, depraved, and hell-deserving, exposed to the wrath of an angry God, and the pains of everlasting punishment." However, the "fatal doctrines of Calvinism" had "a

powerful tendency to dampen and stifle the conviction wrought in my soul by the Holy Spirit." In this spiritually weak condition, Wild confessed, "When I thought of leaving my gay and sinful companions, forsaking all my youthful vanities and folly, when I thought of living soberly, righteously and Godly, . . . I thought the cross was rather too heavy, and the path rather too narrow."⁹ He would procrastinate his repentance again and again.

When Wild finally decided to forsake his sins, he experienced a "witness that God, for Christ's sake, had forgiven all my trespasses, and adopted me into his family." Yet he allowed his ideas about election to lull him into security, and he soon slipped back into his old sinful ways. Wild would later lament: "I continued to drink into the accursed doctrines of the Calvinistic system, till I became wholly destitute of all the reality of internal, heart religion." His backsliding, Wild concluded, was "one part of the baneful consequences of the doctrine of unconditional perseverance; or the doctrine that teaches the impossibility of falling from grace, or losing the favor of God." Calvinism, Wild believed, "lulls the mind to sleep in its sins, . . . and fatally entraps it in 'the snare of the Devil.'" "It is said by the Calvinists," he wrote, "that though the christian may fall into sin, and that very notoriously, and scandalously; yet he continues in the favour, and love of God;—that a person may even commit murder, adultery, and crimes too black to mention, and at the same time be a christian, and an heir of heaven." This Wild called an "impious, flesh-pleasing, and blasphemous doctrine."¹⁰

When Wild became convinced of the error of these teachings and sought the favor of God through repentance, "the Lord graciously heard and answered . . . these fresh anointings diffused a sweetness, happiness, and such a degree of fortitude and spiritual strength through my soul, that I was enabled to overcome sin." After this, Wild said, "God began to reveal to me the necessity of having a deeper work of grace wrought in my heart." Wild believed God had begun his "preparatory work" within him by "communicating to [his] mind a superior degree of light" until "the whole, and every part of [his] fallen, depraved nature, [had been] eradicated from [his] heart."¹¹

The Book of Mormon sounded a congruent critique of Calvinism. In fact, Alexander Campbell quoted passages from the Book of Mormon such as "the atonement is infinite for all mankind" (2 Ne. 25:16) and then sarcastically stated that "the

Calvinists were in America before Nephi.”¹² In the Book of Mormon, for example, the apostate Zoramites cite the doctrine of election in prayer: “We believe that thou hast elected us to be thy holy children; and . . . thou hast elected us that we shall be saved, whilst all around us are elected to be cast by thy wrath down to hell” (Al. 31:16–17).

Like Asa Wild, the Book of Mormon promotes Arminianism. Because humans “are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon” (2 Ne. 2:26). They are “left to choose good or evil” (Al. 13:3). Humans are thus responsible for their own acts. It is mortal men and women who choose Jesus, not Jesus who chooses them. “Ye must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, to be judged according to your works” (Morm. 6:21), states the Book of Mormon. “Whosoever will come may come and partake of the waters of life freely; and whosoever will not come the same is not compelled to come; but in the last day it shall be restored unto him according to his deeds” (Al. 42:27). Alma declares that God “granteth unto men according to their desire, whether it be unto death or unto life; yea, I know that he allotteth unto men, yea, decreeth unto them decrees which are unalterable, according to their wills, whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction” (Al. 29:4). The seer Nephi also perceived grace as conditional: “We know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Ne. 25:23).

Whereas Calvinists believed that Jesus’ atonement applied only for those predestined to salvation, Arminians stressed that the Atonement was available to all, although all may not avail themselves of its benefits. The Book of Mormon asserts the Arminian teaching that “the way is prepared from the fall of man, and salvation is free” (2 Ne. 2:4). Jesus makes universal “intercession for all the children of men; and they that believe in him shall be saved” (2 Ne. 2:9). Jesus came to “die for all men, that all men might become subject unto him” (2 Ne. 9:5). Nephi declares that “the atonement . . . is infinite for all mankind” (2 Ne. 25:16). Similarly Nephi explains:

[Jesus Christ] doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world; for he loveth the world, even that he layeth down his own life that he may draw all men unto him. Wherefore, he commandeth none that they shall not partake of his salvation. Behold, doth he cry unto any, saying: Depart from me? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; but he saith: Come unto me all

ye ends of the earth, buy milk and honey, without money and without price. . . . Hath he commanded any that they should not partake of his salvation? Behold I say unto you, Nay; but he hath given it free for all men; and he hath commanded his people that they should persuade all men to repentance. Behold, hath the Lord commanded any that they should not partake of his goodness? Behold I say unto you, Nay; but all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden (2 Ne. 26:24-25, 27-28).

The Book of Mormon prophet Abinadi argues that anyone who believes God will redeem his people "are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God" (Mos. 15:11). And Book of Mormon missionaries "were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish; yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure endless torment did cause them to quake and tremble" (Mos. 28:3; see also 28:7; Al. 3:19; 5:48; 9:17).

The Book of Mormon also predictably teaches that those who are saved can fall from grace. Nephi warns followers: "Unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved" (2 Ne. 31:16; see also 1 Ne. 13:37; 2 Ne. 31:15, 20; 3 Ne. 15:9). Alma addresses those who have "gone astray," warning, "If ye will not hearken unto the voice of the good shepherd, . . . behold, ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd" (Al. 5:37-38). The early Mormon "Articles and Covenants" similarly denounced the concept of predestination by stating explicitly that "there is a possibility that man may fall from grace" (D&C 20:32). And in his 1832 first vision account Joseph Smith rejected the Calvinistic doctrine of a limited atonement. When Jesus appeared he declared: "Thy sins are forgiven thee . . . I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life."¹³

Still, as Marvin Hill has pointed out, there are "remnants" of Calvinism both in the Book of Mormon and in early Mormon doctrine.¹⁴ For example, the Book of Mormon states that "the natural man is an enemy to God" (Mos. 3:19) and that "because of the fall our natures have become evil continually" (Eth. 3:2). Yet such "remnants" were characteristic of other contemporary Arminian groups as demonstrated by the rhetoric of the revivalists. Early Mormon convert Eli Gilbert placed Mormonism somewhere between "mungrel calvinism and crippled arminianism."¹⁵

Certainly early Mormons, like Seekers and other Primitivists, participated in the general rejection of Calvinism characteristic of the times.

However, one radical reaction against Calvinist doctrine, that of the Universalists, was condemned by Primitivists, Seekers, and early Mormons. Universalists argued for universal salvation or "restoration"—that Jesus' atonement applies to all regardless of performance in mortality. Thus Universalists stressed God's mercy rather than vengeance and threw the gates of heaven open wide, extending salvation to everyone.

The Universalists first convened as a body in Oxford, Massachusetts, in 1785.¹⁶ They flourished among the uneducated rural inhabitants of northern New England and soon spread into New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. Although its rate of growth could not match that of the leading denominations in the United States, Universalism was nevertheless a concern for the more orthodox churches during the early decades of the nineteenth century.¹⁷ The *Boston Recorder* declared in 1834 that "Universalism is the reigning heresy of the day. It is spreading itself far and wide. It is poisoning more minds, and ruining more souls, than any, if not all other heresies among us."¹⁸

Universalism in New England began with the teachings of John Murray (1741–1815), an Englishman who landed in New Jersey in 1770 and who is usually credited with laying the foundation for Universalism as a denomination. Although Murray was a Calvinist in every other respect, he discarded the notion that Jesus had suffered only for the elect. Murray believed that some would be punished in the next life for unbelief, not for sin, and that after being punished all would be redeemed and reconciled to God, thus making a "restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21).

Another Englishman who exerted some influence on American Universalism was Elhanan Winchester (1751–97). Winchester's Universalism was similar to Murray's. He believed in an interim period of suffering, but he differed from Murray in believing that humankind would be punished in the afterlife, perhaps for 50,000 years, for its sins and that salvation would come only after complete purgation.

If Murray was troubled by Winchester's version of Universalism, he was even more concerned by those who argued that upon death one could be quickly restored to holiness and happiness and return immediately to God's presence. As early as 1790, Murray lamented that "some dangerous errors [were] creeping

in among the people, and I am afraid they will prevail. They teach that the day of the Lord is past, that there is no future sorrow to be apprehended."¹⁹

In an attempt to unify their teachings, the General Convention of Universalists adopted in 1803 the following as an article of faith: "We believe that there is one God, whose nature is Love, revealed in one Lord Jesus Christ, by one Holy Spirit of Grace, who will finally restore the whole family of mankind to holiness and happiness."²⁰ However, this statement was vague enough to allow disagreement to persist. Universalists who followed Winchester's belief that humans will suffer a period of punishment in the afterlife before being saved became known as "Restorationists." Those who denied punishment after death were sometimes called "Ultra Universalists."²¹ The term "restoration," however, was a catch word for both groups, who used it to refer to the "final restoration of all men to happiness."²²

Other developments in Universalism took place under Hosea Ballou (1772–1852). In his influential 1805 book *A Treatise on Atonement*, he rejected the notion of the trinity and set Universalism on the theological road that eventually led to union with the Unitarians. He also rejected the idea of a vicarious atonement and was unsure about the nature and duration of future punishment, although he emphatically denounced the assertion that the scriptures proved "the endless misery of a mortal being."²³ Later Ballou would take a stand against future retribution.²⁴

Orthodox Christians believed that Universalists denied the justice of God, ignored clear references in the Bible to endless torment in hell, promoted immoral behavior, and neglected repentance. Orthodox Christians were especially troubled by the ultra-Universalist claim that there was neither a devil nor hell. For example, on 25 August 1826, the *Gospel Advocate*, a Universalist newspaper published in Buffalo, New York, declared that "the devil is a nonentity, and an endless hell of brimstone a bug-bear."²⁵ On 3 March 1826 the same paper printed a letter from an orthodox Christian which asserted that Universalists "blasphemiously assert that there is neither hell nor devil."²⁶

Universalists declared "holiness and true happiness are inseparably connected: and that believers ought to be careful to maintain order and practice good works," but urged for such behavior because it is "good and profitable unto man," not to avoid punishment or hell.²⁷ Orthodox Christians argued that punishment

was necessary to motivate obedience to God's law and that without constraints public safety and democracy were threatened. In 1779, Murray tried to allay fears: "As dwellers in the world, though not of it, we hold ourselves bound to yield obedience to every ordinance of men, for God's sake, and we will be peaceable and obedient subjects to the powers that are ordained of God in all civil cases."²⁸ But misunderstanding persisted. Forty years later, for example, the presiding Methodist elder of New York's Black River Conference in a debate with a local Universalist attacked his beliefs "as equally destructive of individual peace and public safety."²⁹

Primitivists and Seekers were also troubled by Universalism. Alexander Campbell spoke out against the Universalists in 1825, declaring that "all the Universalists on earth cannot produce one sentence in all the revelations of God that says any thing about the termination of the punishment of the wicked."³⁰ Seeker Erastus Hanchett wrote against both Calvinism and Universalism, stating that "people do not know the scriptures nor the power of God; if they did, they would hold no such doctrines." He argued that everyone cannot possibly be saved since God promised to bless only Abraham's seed; and since one can become Abraham's seed only through spiritual regeneration, everyone will not be saved.³¹

That the Book of Mormon referred to Universalism was recognized by both Mormons and non-Mormons alike. Alexander Campbell claimed that it "decides all the great controversies," including "eternal punishment."³² E. D. Howe, interpreting the first chapter of Alma, wrote: "The name of our ancient Universalist is called Nehor."³³ A four-page printed Mormon document from about 1835 refers to Book of Mormon characters as "Nehor the Universalian" and "Amlici the Universalist."³⁴ An early convert, Eli Gilbert, read the Book of Mormon and remembered how "it bore hard upon my favorite notions of universal salvation."³⁵

In addition, the Book of Mormon refers to those in "the last days" who would teach Universalism. Moroni writes that the Book of Mormon would come forth in a day "when there shall be many who will say, Do this, or do that, and it mattereth not, for the Lord will uphold such at the last day. But wo unto such, for they are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity" (Morm. 8:31). Nephi refers first to latter-day Universalists, who say, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die; and it shall be well with us," then to the Restorationists, who say, "Eat, drink, and

be merry; nevertheless, fear God—he will justify in committing a little sin; yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God" (2 Ne. 28:7–8). That Nephi is describing an organized group rather than a prevailing attitude is indicated by his explicit reference to latter-day "churches" which would "contend one with another" (28:3, 4). He condemns the teachings of these churches as "false and vain and foolish doctrines" (28:9). He seems also to refer to Universalism when he further prophesies that Satan in the last days would deceive many because he "telleteth them there is no hell; and he saith unto them: I am no devil, for there is none" (28:22).

The Book of Mormon describes a Universalist sect among the ancient Nephites. A dissident Nehor teaches "that all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice; for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life" (Al. 1:3–4). Nehor wins converts and founds a church which contends against the established and more orthodox "church of God" headed by Alma. When Nehor debates the more orthodox Gideon about theology, he draws his sword and murders Gideon, for which he is taken to the top of a hill and hanged because "this people must abide by the law" (1:14). Before he dies, Nehor acknowledges, "between the heavens and the earth, that what he had taught to the people was contrary to the word of God; and there he suffered an ignominious death" (1:15).

The lesson for Universalists was clear. Just as Nehor suffered death for breaking the law, so he would also suffer eternal death for disobeying God's commandments. And just as he acknowledged his error "between the heavens and the earth," he would suffer "between death and the resurrection" (Al. 40:11–14). Later, Book of Mormon missionaries encounter the inhabitants of the city of Ammonihah, who are "of the profession of Nehor" (Al. 14:16, 18; 15:15). The missionary Amulek declares to them that "the Lord surely shall come to redeem his people; but that he should not come to redeem them in their sins, but to redeem them from their sins" (He. 5:10; Al. 11:36–37).

Universalists in Joseph Smith's day would have understood Amulek's argument. Elhanan Winchester, for example, argued

in his *Lectures on the Prophecies* that the "foundation" for understanding the "doctrine of salvation" was found in Matthew 1:21: "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." He reasoned that since "all men are certainly the people of Jesus, . . . consequently he shall save all mankind from their sins."³⁶ The orthodox disagreed. Charles Marford of Victor, New York, for example, preached in about 1819 that "Christ is a Savior to Save his people from their Sins, and not in them and those that think otherwise will be overthrown with that dreadful overthrow with which God overthrew Sodom and Gomorah."³⁷

Charles Finney did not think this argument a strong one against Universalists. "I have heard men preach against the idea that men are saved *in* their sins, and they supposed they were preaching down Universalist doctrine. Universalists believe no such thing."³⁸ Universalist Hosea Ballou complained in 1805 that "the opposers of universalism have generally written and contended the doctrine, under an entire mistaken notion of it. They have endeavored to show the absurdity of believing that men could be received into the kingdom of glory and righteousness *in their sins*; which no Universalist ever believed." He reminded readers that "the salvation which God wills is a salvation *from sin*."³⁹

In the Book of Mormon, Alma's son Corianton had forsaken his ministry to the Zoramites and had taken up with "wicked harlots," especially the "harlot Isabel" (Al. 39:3, 11). This conduct was largely due to Corianton's newly found belief that God is merciful and will "restore" all men, both good and evil, to his presence (40:15–41:15). In a letter to Corianton, Alma gives four major arguments against his son's new belief.

First, Alma condemns his son's sins, writing that "if ye deny the Holy Ghost when it once has had place in you, and ye know that ye deny it, behold, this is a sin which is unpardonable" (39:6). The orthodox in Joseph Smith's day liked to quote from the New Testament about the "unpardonable sin" (Matt. 12:31–32; Mk. 3:29; Lk. 12:10) in refuting universalists.⁴⁰

Alma then discusses "the state of the soul between death and the resurrection" (40:11). Alma tells Corianton that, contrary to his Universalist beliefs, upon death there are two abodes for the spirits of God's children. "The spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise," Alma says. But "the spirits of the wicked . . . shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping, and wailing,

and gnashing of teeth, and this because of their iniquity" (40:12-13). Universalists who often heard the orthodox argue against their beliefs using the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Lk. 16:1-31) would have easily identified with this argument.⁴¹

Alma explains that the punishment of the wicked is a result of God's justice. God's justice cannot be overridden by his mercy, "if so, God would cease to be God" (42:13). Because of the fall of Adam, justice demands that all be condemned. Only through the atonement of Jesus Christ can humankind be saved: "And now, the plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also" (42:15). (Alma's argument that God is both merciful and just would have been recognized by Universalists as a favorite ploy of the orthodox.⁴²)

Finally, Alma explains to his wayward son that he has misunderstood the concept of restoration. Like nineteenth-century Universalists, Corianton interpreted scriptural references to "restoration" to mean that all humankind would finally "be restored from sin to happiness" (41:10). Alma explains that the "restoration of which has been spoken by the mouth of the prophets" refers to a time when "the soul shall be restored to the body" (40:22-26). He then warns, "Do not suppose, because it has been spoken concerning restoration, that ye shall be restored from sin to happiness. Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness" (41:10). Furthermore, a restoration will "bring back again evil for evil, or carnal for carnal, or devilish for devilish—good for that which is good; righteous for that which is righteous; just for that which is just; merciful for that which is merciful . . . therefore, the word restoration more fully condemneth the sinner, and justifieth him not at all" (41:13, 15).⁴³ Alma's discourse on salvation and the meaning of "restoration" must have persuaded Corianton, for he returned to the ministry (63:1-2, 10).

Rejection of Calvinistic theology was part of a general reaction against the rational, intellectual approach to religion which dominated the church in Europe and England throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Religious worship was liturgical and controlled by an intellectual professional clergy closely associated with the aristocracy. The clergy was out of touch with

the spiritual needs of common people, who yearned for a more emotionally based religion.

By the mid-1600s, the radical reformers in England began seeking a deeper, more spiritual reformation. Anabaptists, Seekers, Ranters, and Quakers attacked the established church and its clergy, preached a religion of the poor, argued for the supremacy of intuition and inspiration, elevated lay preachers to leadership, and rejected the professional clergy as spiritless and without proper authority. John Wesley, founder of Methodism, appealed to the masses with emotional rhetoric.

The Great Awakening of the 1730s and 1740s marked the first major repudiation of professional clergy in America. The clergy became objects of scorn and derision in the anti-intellectual fervor. The Second Great Awakening in the first half of the nineteenth century was similarly congruent with the anti-intellectual and anti-professional mood of Jacksonian America. Andrew Jackson, from Tennessee, seemed to embody the romantic notions many had about the West. The frontiersman, as the myth went, was wild and uneducated but lived by practical and common sense. He was not a philosopher but a man of action and, above all, in harmony with nature. For many Americans, Jackson was all this and more. He first earned his reputation at the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812 when he and his untrained farmers defeated the professional British soldiers. Jackson was elected U.S. president in 1828, giving the common man the feeling that one of them had reached the presidency.⁴⁴ Richard Hofstadter has written about the effect of such an anti-intellectual and anti-professional environment on religion:

The style of a church or sect is to a great extent a function of social class, and the forms of worship and religious doctrine congenial to one social group may be uncongenial to another. The possessing classes have usually shown much interest in rationalizing religion and in observing highly developed liturgical forms. The disinherited classes, especially the unlettered, have been more moved by emotional religion; and emotional religion is at times animated by a revolt against the religious style, the liturgy, and the clergy of the upper-class church, which is at the same time a revolt against aristocratic manners and morals. Lower-class religions are likely to have apocalyptic or millennarian outbursts, to stress the validity of inner religious experience against learned and formalized religion, to simplify liturgical forms, and to reject

the idea of a learned clergy, sometimes of any professional clergy whatsoever.⁴⁵

In this context, the particular sensitivity of Joseph Smith and his family to such divisions in matters of religion does not seem unrelated to the family's diminishing economic and social status.⁴⁶ Smith's ancestors were respected citizens of Puritan New England. Robert Smith, who immigrated to Massachusetts in 1638, was well-to-do, and his son Samuel held public office. Joseph Smith's great-grandfather held several important offices. His grandfather, Asael, was a maverick who moved from his ancestral home to the "freer" environment of Vermont, but there, with his two sons, Jesse and Joseph, he also prospered. In Tunbridge Asael owned a sizable farm, and eventually two or three others, and over the years held a number of key political offices.⁴⁷

When Lucy and Joseph married in 1796, Joseph's father gave him part ownership in a "handsome" farm in Tunbridge, and Lucy received from her brother and his business partner a \$1,000 wedding present. However, through a series of financial reverses, including bad business ventures, three successive "crop failures," and a general economic slump after the War of 1812, Joseph and Lucy were thrown into the growing class of the disinherited. They moved to New York for brighter prospects.

At the time Lucy and some of her children joined the Presbyterian church, "the family was relatively well off and building a more comfortable home in Palmyra [Manchester]."⁴⁸ Significantly, Lucy chose to follow the Presbyterians, the social and religious elite of the community. About the time Lucy withdrew from the Presbyterian communion, the Smith family was experiencing severe financial hardships. By 1826 the Smiths had again become "renters" and by 1829 were forced to move out of their wooden, frame house into a log cabin.⁴⁹

The Book of Mormon exhibits concerns about economic and social status and pleads the case of the lower classes. "Wo unto the rich, who are rich as to the things of the world," Nephi declares. "For because they are rich they despise the poor, and they persecute the meek, and their hearts are upon their treasures" (2 Ne. 9:30). The false churches in the last days are built up that "they may get gain and grind the face of the poor" (26:20). "They rob the poor because of their fine sanctuaries" (28:13). In fact, the Book of Mormon attacks those of high social status generally: lawyers, judges, and politicians. Mormon describes the

socio-religious situation of the Nephites and condemns both wealth and learning:

There began to be some disputings among the people; and some were lifted up unto pride and boastings because of their exceeding great riches, yea, even unto great persecutions; for there were many merchants in the land, and also many lawyers, and many officers. And the people began to be distinguished by ranks, according to their riches and their chances for learning, yea, some were ignorant because of their poverty, and others did receive great learning because of their riches. . . . And thus there became a great inequality in all the land, insomuch that the church began to be broken up (3 Ne. 6:10–12, 14).

Both Primitivists and Seekers shared the anti-professional and anti-clerical attitude of the early nineteenth century, but they differed fundamentally on approach. Primitivists, especially Alexander Campbell's followers, were heirs of the Enlightenment. Although they assailed the professional, paid ministry, and to a limited extent their learning, they emphasized the importance of reason in the conversion process. Seekers, on the other hand, were religious enthusiasts who emphasized the inner, emotional experience. Their attack on the clergy focused therefore on the clergy's lack of spiritual attainments.

Still both groups opposed the paid clergy. Alexander Campbell saw the clergy of the old-line churches as "hirelings" who sought "worldly power and dominion."⁵⁰ "Was there ever such a craft as priestcraft?" Campbell rhetorically asked the readers of the *Christian Baptist* in 1823. "No, it is the craftiest of all crafts! It is so crafty that it obtains by its craft the means to make craftsmen, and then it makes the deluded support them!"⁵¹ In 1826, he wrote: "That any man is to be hired for a stipulated sum to preach and pray, and expound the scripture, by the day, month, or year, I believe to be a relic of popery."⁵²

Seekers too rejected a paid ministry. The English Seekers of the seventeenth century objected to paying tithes to support a professional ministry, and many of them subsequently refused any pay for their own preaching.⁵³ Seekers who preached maintained a secular occupation.⁵⁴ In 1654, Seeker John Webster rhetorically asked: "Did ever Christ teach you to preach for hire, or to make Contracts how much you must have for exercising that Ministry?"⁵⁵

In America, Roger Williams strongly opposed a paid ministry and took a trade himself, arguing that the earliest apostles worked with their own hands.⁵⁶ "It is one of the grand Designes of the most High, to breake downe the Hireling Ministry," he wrote in 1652 against those who turn preaching into a "trade" by accepting tithes.⁵⁷ For, after all, had not those of the first apostolic ministry been men who by "their owne hands day and night, supplied their owne and others Necessities?"⁵⁸

Jason Whitman observed in 1834 in *The Unitarian* that "the Book of Mormon is with some art adapted to the known prejudices of a portion of the community," and then named one: "It is well known, that, among a portion of the community, there is a strong prejudice against the support, by the people, of a regular ministry."⁵⁹ King Mosiah in the Book of Mormon instructed newly ordained priests, for example, that they "should labor with their own hands for their support. . . . And the priests were not to depend upon the people for their support; but for their labor they were to receive the grace of God" (Mos. 18:24, 26).

Professional clergy are expressly condemned by the Book of Mormon. Those who "preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world" (2 Ne. 26:29), are practitioners of "priestcraft." Nephi declares that "the laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion; for if they labor for money they shall perish" (26:31); and that "The Gentiles are lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and have stumbled . . . and preach . . . that they may get gain and grind upon the face of the poor" (26:20). Moroni says the Book of Mormon will "come in a day when there shall be churches built up that shall say: Come unto me, and for your money you shall be forgiven of your sins" (Morm. 8:32). "O ye wicked and perverse and stiffnecked people, why have ye built up churches unto yourselves to get gain?" (8:33).⁶⁰

An additional concern in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America was whether ministers should be specially educated. In 1742 revivalist Gilbert Tennent published *The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry*, which attacked the old-line clerics as cold-hearted, bigoted hypocrites.⁶¹ John Hancock (1702-44), pastor of the First Church in Braintree, Massachusetts, countered in 1743 with *The Danger of an Unqualified Ministry*, which argued that the elevation of the laity would open the door to all kinds of heresies and intruders.

Boston clergyman Charles Chauncy also attacked the revivalists in his 1743 book *Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England*. "They pleaded there was no Need of Learning in preaching, and that one of them could by the SPIRIT do better than the Minister by his Learning; as if the SPIRIT and Learning were Opposites," wrote Chauncy. "Swarms of Exhorters have appear'd in the Land," Chauncy explained, "and been admir'd and run after, though many of them could scarce speak common Sense." They were able to preach because they were "depending on the help of the *spirit*." Chauncy concluded sardonically: "And to the same Cause still it must be attributed that so many Ministers preach, not only without Book, but without Study; and justify their doing so, lest, by previous Preparation, they should stint the Spirit."⁶²

Primitivists and Seekers were also suspicious of the schooled clergy. Primitivists were concerned that the learned ministers were really unconverted and simply practicing their profession. Seekers criticized the clergy for not teaching by the spirit, but they also condemned revivalists for their excesses and for denying direct revelation. According to Seekers, education had its place, but it was not required as a training for the ministry.⁶³ Religious enthusiasm was allowed, but not to the exclusion of reasoned, sensible communication. Seekers also criticized titles designed to raise the clergy to an elite status.⁶⁴

Seeker John Webster, a former priest and master of the grammar school in Clitheroe, vigorously attacked what he called "man-made" ministers, together with their "academick" and "scholastick" training. "If the quintessence of all humane learning were as a Magisterial extract, monopolized in one man, yet were it no fit qualification for a Minister of the Gospel," wrote Webster in 1654.⁶⁵ "Thou mayst have a notion and an opinion of the things of God, and thou hast them by History and by Relation or Education or Example or Custom or Tradition—but if thou hast no evidence of Christ's mighty miracles and Godlike power in thine own soul, how canst thou be a witness or say that thou hast seen and heard?"⁶⁶

Other English Seekers shared this concern for a more spirit-filled ministry. "Surely it is not a University, a Cambridge or Oxford, a Pulpit and Blacke gowne or Cloake, [which] makes one a true Minister of Jesus Christ," declared John Saltmarsh in 1648. Rather, he insisted, true ministers are made only by the call and "unction . . . of the Spirit."⁶⁷ Roger Brierly criticized "heady

opinions" and "forensic Christianity," which he believed ended in the "conceit of knowledge." "Divinity stands not in curious searching of hidden things," he declared, "but in plain evidence of truth that pierces the heart." "All high-flying religion is not of Christ," he claimed.⁶⁸ This attitude carried over to American Seekers, such as Asa Wild.

Early Mormon apostle Parley P. Pratt expressed a congruent sentiment in 1837: "If the churches of the present day have the Holy Ghost, why are they so much at a loss to understand truth? . . . why do they need whole libraries of sermons, tracts, divinities, debates, arguments and opinions, all written by the wisdom of men, without even professing to be inspired? Well doth the Lord complain, saying, 'their fear towards me is taught by the precepts of men.'"⁶⁹ The Book of Mormon condemns latter-day clergy for intellectualizing religion, "contend[ing] one with another, . . . teach[ing] with their learning, and deny[ing] the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance" (2 Ne. 28:4). Moroni says the Book of Mormon will "come in a day when the power of God shall be denied, and churches become defiled and be lifted up in the pride of their hearts; yea, even in a day when leaders of churches and teachers shall rise in pride of their hearts, even to the envying of them who belong to their churches" (Morm. 8:28).

Revivalism was one attempt to to cultivate the influence of the Holy Spirit. In the 1730s, the preaching of John Wesley and George Whitefield in England became associated with the unusual emotional phenomena identified with revivalism. Many in their audiences experienced what was called the "falling power" of the spirit. On 12 June 1741, for example, Wesley recorded in his journal:

I preached on the righteousness of the law and the righteousness of faith. While I was speaking, several dropped down as dead and among the rest such a cry was heard of sinners groaning for the righteousness of faith as almost drowned my voice. But many of these soon lifted up their heads with joy and broke out into thanksgiving, being assured they now had the desire of their soul—the forgiveness of their sins.⁷⁰

The Great Awakening in America was initiated by visits from Wesley, Whitefield, and Thomas Loke, and continued in large part through the preaching of Jonathan Edwards at Northampton, Massachusetts. Revivals were first prominent in 1735–37 and 1739–42. Edwards counted some of the phenomena displayed at these early

revivals as emotional extravagances,⁷¹ writing of the preaching of Samuel Buell (1716–98): “There were some instances of persons lying in a sort of trance, remaining for perhaps a whole twenty-four hours motionless, and with their senses locked up; but in the meantime under strong imaginations, as though they went to heaven, and had there a vision of glorious and delightful objects.”⁷² Edwards regretted the passing of the revivals, whatever their faults, and expressed to the Reverend William McCulloch in 1743 his concern for those in New England who remained unconverted.⁷³

Although the First Great Awakening occurred chiefly among the moderate Puritans and “New Light” Presbyterians and was an attempt to revive a dying church, the Second Great Awakening in the early nineteenth century took place primarily in the south and the west among those who found it necessary to combine mission zeal and revivalism in the intensely competitive environment of the new nation. The frontier camp meeting became the characteristic feature of evangelical revivalism in the nineteenth century.

The spiritual excesses of the first awakening were duplicated in the second. When the “Great Revival” commenced in 1801 in Logan County, Kentucky, under the preaching of Presbyterian minister James McGready (1758–1817), Barton W. Stone was there. The phenomena he described were typical of many frontier revivals:

The scene to me was new. . . . Many, very many fell down, as men slain in battle, and continued for hours together in an apparently breathless and motionless state—sometimes for a few moments reviving, and exhibiting symptoms of life by a deep groan, or piercing shriek, or by a prayer for mercy most fervently uttered. After lying thus for hours, they obtained deliverance. The gloomy cloud, which had covered their faces, seemed gradually and visibly to disappear, and hope in smiles brightened into joy—they would rise shouting deliverance, and then would address the surrounding multitude in language truly eloquent and impressive. . . . Under such addresses many others would fall down into the same state from which the speakers had just been delivered.⁷⁴

Stone soon conducted his own revival at Cane Ridge, Kentucky, with similar results.⁷⁵ The Logan County and Cane Ridge revivals became standards for subsequent revivals, but all were not

occasions for wild enthusiasm. Many, perhaps most, revivals were conducted with "good order and decorum."⁷⁶

While revivalists viewed the physical phenomena as outward manifestation of the inward working of the Spirit, others disagreed. John Williamson Nevin (1803–86), a German Reformed professor of theology at Mercersburg Seminary, wrote a 150-page attack on revivalism in 1843 entitled *The Anxious Bench*. Nevin charged that the revivalistic phenomena were the result of "wild fanatical influences" and did not "proceed from the Holy Ghost."⁷⁷

Primitivists were divided on the subject of camp-meeting revivalism. While Barton Stone and others favored revivalism, Alexander Campbell had a distaste for camp meetings and "mystical impulses," but would soften on the issue in the 1840s.⁷⁸ Campbell asserted that the spiritual gifts of prophecy, tongues, and healing were "confined to the apostolic age."⁷⁹ At the same time, however, he also believed that "a religion of which the Holy Spirit is not the author, the subject matter, and the perfecter is sheer Deism."⁸⁰ What Campbell most objected to was the extreme bodily agitations and the tendency to disregard the role of reason in the conversion process.⁸¹ Nevertheless, Campbell earned a reputation as an extremely rational preacher.

Seekers, on the other hand, generally believed that spiritual gifts were the privilege of true believers in all ages. Not only was the loss of spiritual gifts "the lamentation of all Saints," according to Roger Williams, "but [if] extraordinary gifts be ceased, how shall now the people . . . be supplied with Ministers."⁸² Williams therefore anticipated the restoration of spiritual gifts, but he had reservations about "those great bodily Shakings which have been believed to have come in mightily upon [the Quakers]," which he saw as nothing more than "the power of Devilish spirits."⁸³

Other Seekers apparently received revelations, saw visions, exercised spiritual gifts, and experienced religious enthusiasm. Asa Wild, less conservative than Williams, described his personal experiences and the criticisms he received:

Sometimes I have felt such a degree of the presence and power of God, that it has caused me involuntarily to break forth in exclamations of praise, thanksgiving, and exhortation, although surrounded by cold and heartless professors, who verily thought that such proceedings were the height of

enthusiasm, false zeal, and even phrenzy, insanity, and madness itself; at best the delusions, temptations, and machinations of satan. By this time my Calvinistic brethren became very much concerned, thinking I was nearly ruined and undone, concluding I was apostatised from the faith, "giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of Devils."

Wild's narrative otherwise echoes revivalistic language. At one place, for example, he issues a revivalistic plea for the sinner: "O, exert thyself; lay hold of the never-failing promises of the immutable God. Cast your polluted soul upon the altar of that promise, and the fire of divine love, and the efficacy of the all-cleansing blood of the immaculate Jesus, will 'dart a sin-consuming pain,' and fill your heart with the sweetest joy." Wild was concerned that even the Methodists "limit the operations of the Spirit." He finally concluded that "nothing short of the immediate teaching of [God's] Spirit could enable me to travel the road to heaven, in such a manner as I desired, and as he commanded."⁸⁴ Wild attacked the clergy for their reliance on "depraved reason" and charged that only "the teaching of the Spirit" can reveal the true meaning of scripture.⁸⁵

Wild addressed those who have "the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof":

By these, I mean the great body of professors of religion, including all denominations, who do not daily experience and practice that which is recorded and commanded in the Bible, relative to christian experience and duty. . . . I say that you . . . deny the very essence of christianity, though you may have some of the outward form of it. Be it known to you, (and by the authority of God I speak it,) you are deceiving your own selves; and so continuing, you will go down to hell. . . . Although you constitute by far the majority of professed christians, yet your numbers will not save you, nor enable you to stand in that day when every man's works shall be tried as by fire.⁸⁶

Wild felt that true Christians should exercise spiritual gifts such as "the discernment of spirits, the gift of tongues, power to inflict judgments, to heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out devils, baptise with the Holy Ghost, etc."⁸⁷

Mormons could agree with Wild's complaint that all deny "the immediate infallible 'inspiration of God.'" The Book of Mormon claimed it would come forth in a day when it will be popular to "deny the revelations of God, and say that they are done away"

(Morm. 9:7). Apostle Parley P. Pratt charged that "the whole train of modern divines profess no Revelation, later than the Bible, and no direct inspiration, or supernatural gift of the Spirit."⁸⁸ Pratt complained: "We are told by modern divines, that the days of miracles have gone by forever; and those who believe in miracles, in our day, are counted as impostors, or at least, poor ignorant fanatics, and the public are warned against them, as false teachers who would, if possible, deceive the very elect."⁸⁹

Unitarian Jason Whitman described in 1834 the Mormon argument which intimately connected spiritual gifts with the restoration of power and authority. "They state," wrote Whitman,

what all admit to be facts, that, in the primitive ages of the church, there was among the disciples the power of speaking with tongues and of working miracles; that, at the present day, no denomination of Christians possesses this power. From these facts they draw the conclusion, that all denominations of Christians have departed from the true faith of the primitive church. They then claim for themselves and the members of their church the power of speaking with tongues and of working miracles. . . . They assert it as a fact, that among them the dead have been raised and the sick healed. From these facts, as they call them, they draw the conclusion that they are the members of the true church of Christ.⁹⁰

Not surprisingly, however, the Mormon workings of the spirit were not always easily distinguished from revival experiences. Early Mormon convert Benjamin Brown related the following story:

A knowledge was given me that the ancient gifts of the Gospel—speaking in tongues, the power to heal the sick, the spirit of prophecy, &c., were just about to be restored to the believers in Christ. . . . A few days after, curiosity led me to visit the Latter-day Saints, amongst whom I witnessed a fulfillment of the prediction, for I beheld a manifestation of the gifts of prophecy and tongues, and received the latter myself.⁹¹

The *Painesville Telegraph* reported on a Mormon gathering in 1831, stating that "a scene of the wildest enthusiasm was exhibited, . . . they would fall, as without strength, roll upon the floor, . . . they exhibited all the apish actions imaginable, making grimaces both horrid and ridiculous. . . . At other times they are taken with a fit of jabbering which they neither understand themselves nor any

body else, and this they call speaking foreign languages by divine inspiration."⁹²

During the period Brown described, Joseph Smith dictated a revelation warning the elders of "false spirits" and instructing them to reject all spirits which they cannot understand (D&C 50:1-36). In an 1842 editorial in the *Times and Seasons*, he explained that the true gift of the Holy Ghost was somewhere between two common extremes. "Some people have been in the habit of calling every supernatural manifestation, the effects of the spirit of God, whilst there are others that think their [sic] is no manifestation connected with it at all," he said. The Latter-day Saints believe in the gifts of the Holy Ghost but believe in it "rationally, reasonably, consistently, and scripturally, and not according to the wild vagaries, foolish, notions and traditions of men."⁹³ This meant that they believed in such scriptural gifts of the Spirit as tongues, interpretation of tongues, discernment, prophecy, healing but rejected such excesses as "jerking" and "barking." This position was not unlike that of Roger Williams or moderate revivalists such as Jonathan Edwards who advised that "gifts [of the spirit] were to be exercised with prudence, because God was not the author of confusion but of peace."⁹⁴

Joseph Smith may have experienced several revivals first-hand, but the revival which seems to have impressed him most commenced in Palmyra in 1824. The revival, as Smith recalled in 1838, "commenced with the Methodists" and "soon became general among all the sects in that region of country." The revival reached such fervor that "the whole district of country seemed affected by it, and great multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties."⁹⁵ Smith reported that he "attended their several meetings as often as occasion would permit," that he "became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect," and even "felt some desire to be united with them." But he later confessed that he could not "get Religion" and "feel and shout like the rest."⁹⁶

Smith articulated his teen-age experiences with revivalistic motifs in 1832, 1838, and at other times. The revival in Palmyra motivated Smith, like many others, to seek forgiveness of sins. He could not get religion at the meetings, so he sought it in the woods. In his earliest version, Smith mentioned that while reading the Bible his "mind [had] become exceedingly distressed for I [had] become convicted of my sins." He therefore "cried unto the Lord for mercy." In the woods, Smith continued, he saw "a pillar of . . . light above the brightness of the sun at noon day come

down from above and rested upon me. I was filled with the spirit of God . . . and I saw the Lord; he spake unto me saying. 'Joseph my son thy sins are forgiven thee.'"⁹⁷ Smith remembered in 1838 that the experience drained him of his natural strength—a phenomenon similar to the "falling power" experienced in the revivals. "When I came to myself again, I found myself lying on my back, looking up into heaven," he recorded.⁹⁸

The Book of Mormon speaks of the "falling power" of religious enthusiasm.⁹⁹ "I am full of the Spirit of God, insomuch that my frame has no strength," Nephi tells his brothers (1 Ne. 17:47). On another occasion he explains, "I have workings in the spirit, which doth weary me even that all my joints are weak" (19:20). Similarly, Alma's conversion comes in dramatic revivalistic fashion. Alma records: "We all fell to the earth, for the fear of the Lord came upon us" (Al. 36:6–10; cf. Mos. 27:12). After three days, Alma explains, "my limbs did receive their strength again, and I stood upon my feet, and did manifest unto the people that I had been born of God" (36:23). The Book of Mormon King Lamoni is also converted in revivalistic style. Ammon preaches the gospel to him, and he cries "O Lord, have mercy," then "fell unto the earth, as if he were dead" (Al. 18:41–42). And Ammon "knew that king Lamoni was under the power of God; he knew that the dark veil of unbelief was being cast away from his mind, . . . and that the light of everlasting life was lit up in his soul, yea, he knew that this had overcome his natural frame, and he was carried away in God" (19:6). After two days the king awoke and exclaimed: "I have seen my Redeemer" (19:13). This so astonished the queen and the king's servants that they also fell to the earth (19:13–18).

When the predicted signs accompanying Jesus' birth appear in the Book of Mormon, many are so astonished that the falling power is manifested on a scale far beyond that of the legendary Logan County and Cane Ridge, Kentucky, revivals:

At the going down of the sun there was no darkness. . . . And there were many, who had not believed the words of the prophets, who fell to the earth and became as if they were dead. . . . And they began to know that the Son of God must shortly appear; yea, in fine, all the people upon the face of the whole earth from the west to the east, both in the land north and in the land south, were so exceedingly astonished that they fell to the earth. . . . But it came to pass that they soon became converted, and were convinced of the error

which they were in . . . and did confess their faults (3 Ne. 1:15–17, 25).

The Book of Mormon not only describes a kind of pilgrimage in search of spiritual manifestations and new revelation within a revivalistic setting, it does so using revivalistic language. Phrases such as “Have ye spiritually been born of God?” (Al. 5:14); “Have ye received his image in your countenances?” (Al. 5:14); “Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?” (Al. 5:14); “If ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love” (Al. 5:26; cf. 5:9, 26:13); “repent . . . while his arm of mercy is extended towards you in the light of day” (Jac. 6:5; cf. Mos. 16:12, 29:20; Al. 5:33; 3 Ne. 9:14); “tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus” (Morm. 1:15); “I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love” (2 Ne. 1:15); are familiar rhetorical phrases which would have been recognized by many of the book’s nineteenth-century readers as revivalistic.¹⁰⁰

Thus the Book of Mormon participated in the spirit of revivalism, although warily, just as Joseph Smith and many other Seekers did. Early Mormon converts, especially those on the Ohio Reserve, were given to the spiritual extremes associated with revivalistic enthusiasm and forced Joseph Smith to discourage such excesses. But Mormonism’s concept of charisma would prove to be more radical than that of even the most enthusiastic revivalist. Direct revelations from God—the desire of Seekers—especially in restoring the true church and true doctrine of Christ, was the promise of Mormonism. The Book of Mormon—echoing the gospel according to Seekers—criticizes rational religion for denying the operations of the spirit while at the same time criticizing revivalism for not embracing a radical enough concept of spiritual gifts.

— NOTES —

1. Increase Mather, *Some Important Truths Concerning Conversion* (Boston, 1684), 4–5. For a general history of Calvinism, see John T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954).

2. On the economic aspects of the decline of Calvinism, see Bernard Bailyn, *New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), esp. 20–23, 40–44, 105–11, 134–42.

3. On Arminianism, see Gerald O. McCulloh, ed., *Man’s Faith and Freedom: The Theological Influence of Jacobus Arminius* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962); also Robert J. Wilson III, *The Benevolent Deity: Ebenezer Gay*

and the Rise of Rational Religion in New England, 1696-1787 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984).

4. *Memoir of Elder Abner Jones by His Son, A. D. Jones* (Boston, 1842), 30-31.

5. *The Life, Conversion, Preaching, Travels and Sufferings of Elias Smith* (Portsmouth, 1816), 58.

6. William Garrett West, *Barton W. Stone: Early American Advocate of Christian Unity* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1954), 24, 40-41. For Stone's later estimation of Calvinism, see *The Biography of Elder Barton Warren Stone, Written by Himself: with Additions and Reflections by Elder John Rogers* (Cincinnati, 1847), 33-34.

7. Royal Humbert, *A Compend of Alexander Campbell's Theology* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1961), 81-84, 95, 117, 128-31, 181.

8. [Asa Wild], *A Short Sketch of the Religious Experience, and Spiritual Travels, of Asa Wild, of Amsterdam, N. Y. Written by himself, by Divine Command, and the most infallible inspiration* (Amsterdam, NY: printed for the author by D. Wells, 1824), 3-4.

9. *Ibid.*, 4-5.

10. *Ibid.*, 6, 10, 11-12, 74, 75.

11. *Ibid.*, 11-12, 14, 16, 18, 19, 21.

12. Alexander Campbell, "The Mormonites," *Millennial Harbinger* 2 (Feb. 1831): 93, 94.

13. Scott H. Faulring, ed., *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), 5-6; see also D&C 10:66-69.

14. See Marvin S. Hill, "The Role of Christian Primitivism in the Origin and Development of the Mormon Kingdom, 1830-1844," Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1968, 103-104, and "The Shaping of the Mormon Mind in New England and New York," *Brigham Young University Studies* 9 (Spring 1969): 363-64.

15. *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (Oct. 1834): 10.

16. The best work on the history of Universalism is Russell E. Miller, *The Larger Hope: The First Century of the Universalist Church in America, 1770-1870* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1979).

17. Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-over District: A Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1950), 17-18. See also Miller, *The Larger Hope*, 161.

18. In the *Trumpet* 15 (17 May 1834): 186.

19. In Richard Eddy, *Universalism in America: A History*, 2 vols. (Boston: Universalist Publishing House, 1884-86), 1:337-38.

20. In Miller, *The Larger Hope*, 45-46.

21. See Eddy, *Universalism*, 2:132-37, 260-342; Kenneth M. Johnson, "The Doctrine of Universal Salvation and the Restorationist Controversy in Early Nineteenth Century New England," Ph.D., diss., University of Ottawa, 1978; and Miller, *Larger Hope*, 111-26.

22. *Gospel Advocate*, 19 Jan. 1827 and 3 Feb. 1826.

23. Hosea Ballou, *A Treatise on Atonement* (Randolph, VT, 1805), 189.

24. Ballou began presenting his arguments against retribution in 1817 in the columns of the *Gospel Visitant* (Charlestown, MA). See Miller, *Larger Hope*, 111, 112–14. See also Ballou's *Examination of the Doctrine of Future Retribution, on the Principles of Morals, Analogy, and the Scriptures* (1834).
25. *Gospel Advocate* 4 (25 Aug. 1826): 245.
26. *Ibid.*, 4 (3 March 1826): 58.
27. In Miller, *Larger Hope*, 46.
28. *Ibid.*, 170.
29. In Ernest Cassara, ed., *Universalism in America: A Documentary History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 128.
30. *The Christian Baptist* 3 (5 Dec. 1825): 104–105.
31. Erastus Hanchett, *A Serious Call in Christian Love, to All People; in the Form of A Letter to Henry Colman . . .* (Boston, [1825]), 14–15; see also 17–18, 19.
32. Campbell, "The Mormonites," 93.
33. E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled [sic]: or, A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, from Its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, OH: E. D. Howe, 1834), 70.
34. See Grant Underwood, "The Earliest Reference Guides to the Book of Mormon: Windows into the Past," *Journal of Mormon History* 12 (1985): 77.
35. Eli Gilbert to Oliver Cowdery, 24 Sept. 1834, *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (Oct. 1834): 9.
36. Elhanan Winchester, *A Course of Lectures on the Prophecies*, 2 vols. (Walpole, NH: Carlisle for Thomas & Thomas: 1800), 2:256–57. This aspect of the Book of Mormon is discussed in Mark Thomas, "Revival Language in the Book of Mormon," *Sunstone* 8 (May-June 1983): 22–23.
37. From original sermons of Charles Marford, in possession of J. Sheldon Fisher of Fishers, New York, brought to my attention by Wesley P. Walters.
38. Charles Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 6th ed. (New York, 1835), 166.
39. Ballou, *Treatise on Atonement*, vii, 209.
40. See, for example, *Gospel Advocate* 1 (26 Sept. 1823): 293; 2 (16 Jan. 1824): 7–8; S. B. W[ylie], "On the Duration of Future Punishment," *Presbyterian Magazine* 1 (March 1821): 123–24; *Methodist Magazine* 3 (June 1820): 213; and *New-York Missionary Magazine, and Repository of Religious Intelligence* 3 (1802): 415.
41. See, for example, John Cleaveland, *An Attempt To nip in the Bud, the unscriptural Doctrine of Universal Salvation* (Salem, MA, 1776), iv; Samuel Hopkins, *An Inquiry Concerning the future State of those who die in their Sins* (Newport, RI, 1783), 31, 73, 83.
42. See examples of this argument in S. B. W[ylie], "Remarks on the Duration of Future Punishment," *Presbyterian Magazine* 1 (Jan. 1821): 17; *Utica Christian Magazine* 1 (Oct. 1813): 227–28.
43. On the Universalist/orthodox debate about the definition of the term "restoration," see [Abel C. Thomas], *Autobiography of Rev. Abel C. Thomas: Including Recollections of Persons, Incidents, and Places* (Boston, 1852), 82–83; Ballou, *Treatise on Atonement*, 179.

44. On the myth of the West as well as the reputation of Andrew Jackson, see Henry N. Smith, *Virgin Land* (Cambridge, 1950); John William Ward, *Andrew Jackson, Symbol for an Age* (New York, 1955); and Carl R. Fish, *The Rise of the Common Man* (New York, 1927).

45. Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 56.

46. The psychological implications of the Smiths' loss of status has been recognized by such historians as Marvin S. Hill, "Christian Primitivism in the Origin and Development of the Mormon Kingdom," 37-41, and "Quest for Refuge: An Hypothesis as to the Social Origins and Nature of the Mormon Political Kingdom," *Journal of Mormon History* 2 (1975): 3-20; and Jan Shippo, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 6.

47. On the ancestry of Joseph Smith, consult Mary Audentia Smith Anderson, *Ancestry and Posterity of Joseph Smith and Emma Hale* (Independence, MO, 1929); Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Joseph Smith's New England Heritage: Influences of Grandfathers Solomon Mack and Asael Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971); Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 15-31.

48. Hill, "Quest for Refuge," 12.

49. Lucy Smith, "Preliminary Draft," unpaginated, LDS church archives. Compare Hill, "Quest for Refuge," 12-13, where he states that "by the time he [Smith] received the golden plates and began translating the Book of Mormon, his father's family, despite strenuous efforts, had lost the farm and fallen once more on hard times. Thus his mother, brothers, and sisters were more receptive as time went by to the new gospel which would particularly appeal to the disinherited."

50. Robert Frederick West, *Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 3-53.

51. *Christian Baptist* 1 (1 Dec. 1823): 91.

52. *Ibid.*, 3 (3 April 1826): 185.

53. Thomas Collier, *A Brief Discovery of the Corruption of the Ministerie* (London, 1647), 1-21; William Dell, *The Tryall of Spirits Both in Teachers and Hearers* (London, 1653), 29; William Erbery, *The Testimony* (London, 1658), 48-59; John Saltmarsh, *End of One Controversie*, in Saltmarsh, *Some Drops of the Vial Poured Out* (London, 1646), 115.

54. See, for example, Dell, *Tryall of Spirits*; William Dell, *The Stumbling Stone, Wherein the University Is Reproved* (London, 1653), 26; Collier, *Brief Discovery*.

55. John Webster, *The Saint's Guide* (London, 1654), [4].

56. [Roger Williams], *Bloudy Tenent* ([London], 1644), 172-73.

57. Roger Williams, *The Hireling Ministry None of Christs* (London, 1652), 7.

58. *Ibid.*, 9-10.

59. Jason Whitman, "The Book of Mormon," *The Unitarian* (Jan. 1834): 47.

60. The early Mormon church heeded this advice by operating with an unpaid ministry. However, in February 1831 Joseph Smith dictated a revelation which stipulated that he receive a living allowance (D&C 43:13).

61. Gilbert Tennent, *The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry Considered in a Sermon on Mark VI, 34* (Boston, 1742), 2-3, 5, 7, 11-13.
62. Charles Chauncy, *Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England* (Boston, 1743), 226, 249, 256-58.
63. Erbery, *The Testimony*, 116; Saltmarsh, *End of One Controversie*, 115; Collier, *Brief Discovery*, 12.
64. William Dell, *The Stumbling Stone, Wherein the University Is Reproved* (London, 1653), iv; Dell, *Tryall of Spirits*, 24-31.
65. John Webster, *The Saint's Guide* (London, 1654), 5. Webster also criticized the universities and higher education in *Academiarum Examen, or The Examination of Academies* (London, 1654), which received an immediate response by [Seth Ward], *Vindiciae academiarum containing, Some briefe Animadversions upon Mr. Websters Book, Stiled, The Examination of Academies* (Oxford, 1654).
66. John Webster, *The Saints Perfect Freedome* (London, 1654), 239.
67. John Saltmarsh, *Some Drops of the Viall* (London, 1648), 112.
68. Roger Brierly, *A Bundle of Soul-convincing, Directing and Comforting Truths* (Edinburgh, 1670), 18.
69. Parley P. Pratt, *A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People* (New York, 1837), 102-103. The Book of Mormon declares that "to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God" (2 Ne. 9:29), but it teaches an emotionally based faith rather than a rationally based one. See Moro. 7:13, 16.
70. John Wesley, *The Journal of John Wesley*, ed. Percy Livingstone Parker (Chicago: Moody Press, n.d.), 99.
71. In May 1741, he attended a meeting where "the whole room was full of nothing but outcries, faintings, and such like." The phenomena soon attracted others to the meeting who, as Edwards recorded, "were overpowered in like manner: and it continued thus for some hours." Edwards later reflected on the scene: "It was a very frequent thing to see an house full of outcries, faintings, convulsions and such like, both with distress, and also with admiration and joy. . . . There were some that were so affected, and their bodies so overcome, that they could not go home, but were obliged to stay all night at the house where they were." Jonathan Edwards, *The Great Awakening*, ed. C. C. Goen, vol. 4, in John E. Smith, ed., *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 5 vols. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 4:546, 547.
72. *Ibid.*, 550.
73. *Ibid.*, 539-41.
74. *The Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone, Written by Himself*, ed. John Rogers, 5th ed. (Cincinnati, 1847), 34-35. According to Jonathan B. Turner, who described the legendary Kentucky revivals in his book *Mormonism in All Ages, or The Rise, Progress, and Causes of Mormonism; with the Biography of its Author and Founder, Joseph Smith, Junior* (New York, 1842), "not less than one thousand fell at one meeting," 272.
75. *Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone*, 36-42.
76. See Charles A. Johnson, "The Frontier Camp Meeting: Contemporary and Historical Appraisals, 1805-1840," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 37 (June 1950): 91-110.

77. J[ohn] W[illiamson] Nevin, *The Anxious Bench* (Chambersburg, PA, 1843), 4, 7.

78. James DeForest Murch, *Christians Only: A History of the Restoration Movement* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1962), 116-17; Robert Richardson, ed., *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 2 vols. (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1897-98), 2:355-61; Johnson, "Frontier Camp Meeting," 91. Walter Scott published in the mid-1830s his *Discourse on the Holy Spirit* designed to counter the tendency of many Primitivists towards rationalism and disbelief of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers. Murch, *Christians Only*, 105.

79. In Joseph W. White, "The Influence of Sidney Rigdon upon the Theology of Mormonism," M.A. thesis, University of Southern California, 1947, 127. See also Humbert, *Compend*, 69.

80. Robinson, *Memoirs*, 2:155.

81. Murch, *Christians Only*, 74-75; Humbert, *Compend*, 109-25.

82. Williams, *Hireling Ministry*, 16-17.

83. R[oger] W[illiams], *George Fox Digg'd out of his Burrowes* (Boston, 1676), 19; see also 27-30.

84. Wild, *Short Sketch*, 18, 23, 44.

85. *Wayne Sentinel*, 22 Oct. 1823.

86. Wild, *Short Sketch*, 50, 83, 85-86.

87. *Ibid.*, 83.

88. Pratt, *Voice of Warning*, 61.

89. *Ibid.*, 58.

90. Whitman, "The Book of Mormon," 46.

91. Benjamin Brown, *Testimonies for the Truth: A Record of Manifestations of the Power of God, Miraculous and Providential, Witnessed in the Travels and Experience of Benjamin Brown* (Liverpool: S. W. Richards, 1853), 7, 12.

92. *Painesville Telegraph*, 1 Nov. 1831, 3. The spiritual excesses in the early church are also described in Parley P. Pratt, Jr., ed., *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 61, and John Corrill, *Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints* (St Louis: printed for the author, 1839), 16. See also Max H. Parkin, "Kirtland, A Stronghold for the Kingdom," in *The Restoration Movement: Essays in Mormon History*, F. Mark McKiernan, Alma R. Blair, and Paul M. Edwards, eds. (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1973), 66-67.

93. Joseph Smith, "Gift of the Holy Ghost," *Times and Seasons* 3 (15 June 1842): 823.

94. Edwards, *Great Awakening*, 108.

95. Joseph Smith, Jr., et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1964), 1:3, hereafter HC.

96. HC 1:3; Alexander Neibaur Journal, 24 May 1844, in Milton V. Backamn, Jr.: *Joseph Smith's First Vision: Confirming Evidences and Contemporary Accounts*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 177.

97. Scott H. Faulring, ed., *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), 5.

98. HC 1:6.

99. Mormon historian B. H. Roberts realized that revivalistic "falling" was similar to what is described in the Book of Mormon. See B. H. Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Brigham D. Madsen (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 284-308.

100. For those in the nineteenth century who recognized the revivalistic language in the Book of Mormon, see T. B. H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints: A Full and Complete History of the Mormons, from the First Vision of Joseph Smith to the Last Courtship of Brigham Young* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1873), 542-43; Clark Braden, *The Braden-Keley Debate* (St. Louis: Christian Publishing Co., [1884?]), 151. For a more recent discussion, see Mark Thomas, "Revival Language in the Book of Mormon," *Sunstone* 8 (May-June 1983): 19-25.

THE Restoration

Perhaps because early Mormons and Seekers more or less agreed about the definition of apostasy, they also shared a sense of how radical the "restoration" of Christianity had to be. They differed in this from other Primitivists, who also looked forward to a restoration¹ and distinguished between restoration and reformation,² but still had a desire to reform only the outward form of the church rather than to restore lost authority and spiritual gifts, including new revelation.

The Seekers awaited a more radical restoration. However, in this expectation the two types of Seekers differed somewhat. Literalistic Seekers were waiting for the restoration of a physical church, spiritualistic Seekers a spiritual one. The latter believed that neither an external church nor ordinances was necessary and therefore anticipated the restoration of authority through some kind of Pentecost.³ Some spiritualistic Seekers gathered with the Quakers, who seemed to fulfill pentecostal expectations.⁴ Others such as Erastus Hanchett continued their search for the invisible church.⁵

In 1823 Asa Wild received a revelation in which the Lord told him that the Millennium would be preceded by a restoration of a physical church, including "the raising up, and sending forth of those persons who are to be the instruments of diffusing the pure light of the gospel;—eradicating darkness, and error; and bringing forth the church from obscurity."⁶ "At first, their success will be somewhat gradual; but as omnipotence is engaged on their side, the kingdom of satan and anti-christ will shortly receive its fatal wound, and suddenly fall with a most tremendous crash."⁷ Further, the Lord told Wild "that he had raised up, and was now raising up, that class of persons signified by the Angel mentioned by the Revelator, XIV. 6, 7, which flew in the midst of

heaven; having the everlasting gospel to preach: that these persons are of an inferior class, and small learning: that they will be rejected by every denomination as a body; but soon, God will open their way, by miracles, judgments, &c.”⁸

Literalistic Seekers were uncertain about the nature of authority and how it would be restored. Some also looked for a new endowment, much like the Pentecost, to reestablish Jesus’ church. But others, especially those who accepted the Catholic concept of apostolic succession, awaited the restoration of authority through angelic ministration. For example, in his 1647 description of the literalistic Seekers, John Saltmarsh wrote that “they wait in this time of apostasy . . . as the apostles and disciples at Jerusalem, till they were endued with power from on high. . . . They wait for an apostle or angel.”⁹ Despite this uncertainty, all Seekers agreed that the restoration would be accompanied by an outward show of authority—through gifts and miracles.

The debate over authority went back to the beginnings of the Reformation. By necessity the reformers had discarded the Catholic concept of a lineal-legal priesthood, replaced it with the doctrine of an equal priesthood of all believers, and stressed inner calling as the qualification for the ministry. Because the legitimacy of medieval European government was so closely tied to the church, the broadening of the notion of religious authority occasioned intense unease. But as old institutionalized forms of authority gradually disintegrated and new individualistic forms of internalized authority emerged, Seekerism flourished. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries produced a greater variety of possible answers to the question of religious authority than any earlier period.¹⁰

The debate among Seekers regarding authority was documented in the writings of Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, and others who were both observers and sometimes participants in the controversy. In 1646, for example, John Saltmarsh wrote in *Groanes for Liberty* that the Seekers “find that the power was first given to the Apostles with gifts, and from them to others, and they [the Seekers] dare not take it from Antichrist and the Bishops [of Rome], as the Reformed Kingdoms generally take it, nor from the Churches [of the Separatists], because they find no such power begun from the Churches.”¹¹ Robert Bayllie wrote in 1647 that the Seekers believed that the ordinances should not be observed nor new churches established “til Elias [Elijah] and new apostles come to kill the Antichrist, and reform these anti-Christian

abuses.”¹² Richard Baxter, a moderate Presbyterian, accused Seekers of being inspired by Rome.¹³ The Seekers’ “great Objection,” wrote Baxter in 1657, “is that we have not an uninterrupted succession from the Apostles, and so those that ordained us had no Power; and therefore could not give it to us.”¹⁴

Baxter argued at length that an uninterrupted succession was unnecessary since ministerial authority came through the commandment expressed through the Bible and the commission of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ In an exchange of letters in 1653 with a “M. Johnson,” Johnson argued that such a position played into the hands of the schismatics, stating that the “Intruders upon the Ministerial Office, are very much strengthened and justified in their Schism and Usurpation, if Succession be not material. . . . But grant a Succession uninterrupted necessary, it will uncontrollably follow, that they are therefore no Ministers of Christ, because they have not been set a part by such who at length took their Authority from Christ’s own Hands.”¹⁶ Baxter then distinguished between “Succession of Office” and “Succession of Ordination to that Office,” stating that “its one thing to ask whether God’s Ordination be necessary, and another, whether Man’s be necessary.”¹⁷ He next stated that “there is no Power but of God,” arguing that “Divine Ordination is of Necessity,” but “Human Ordination” is not.¹⁸ Johnson felt that Baxter played into the hands of the Seekers and conceded their position. Baxter challenged the Seekers to “first disprove our Doctrine if they can; and not cheat the people by perswading them that our calling must first be proved.”¹⁹ The Seekers, he said, “call for miracles to prove our Ministry,”²⁰ which Baxter felt was unreasonable and unscriptural.

For their part, Seekers simply waited “in prayer and conference, pretending to no certain determination of things, nor any infallible consequences or interpretations of Scriptures.” They became nearly transparent in history because they felt they lacked the authority to act until the arrival of “an apostle or angel, that is some with a visible glory and power able, in the Spirit, to give visible demonstration of their sending, as to the world.”²¹

In 1639, lawyer Thomas Lechford, who knew Roger Williams, concluded that the only true church was one in which “Apostles and Evangelists” could trace their authority by the “imposition of hands from one another, downe from the days of the Apostles.” This conclusion led him back into conformity with the

Church of England, which he believed had continued the apostolic succession.²²

For Roger Williams the spiritual darkness of the ministers invalidated their ordinances. In 1643 John Cotton quoted Williams on this point. The ordinances, Williams said, are "practised by persons polluted through spirituall deadnesse and filthinesse of Communion, they [the ordinances] become unclean unto them, and are prophaned by them."²³ "No man ever did nor ever shall truly go forth to Convert the Nations," declared Williams in 1652, "but by the gracious Inspiration and Instigation of the holy Spirit of God. . . . I know no other True Sender, but the most Holy Spirit."²⁴ The absence of spiritual gifts was further evidence to Williams that the professional clergy lacked God's authority.

'Tis true, those glorious first ministeriall gifts are ceased, and that's or should be the lamentation of all Saints. . . . Yet I humbly conceive that without those gifts, it is no ground of imitation, and of going forth to Teach and Baptise the Nations, for, the Apostles themselves did not attempt that mighty enterprise, but waited at Jerusalem untill the Holy Spirit descended on them, and inabled them for that mighty work.²⁵

Asa Wild was told that God's new ministers would "have higher authority, greater power, superior inspiration, and a greater degree of holiness, than was ever experienced before."²⁶

Preoccupation with ecclesiastical authority was especially evident in post-Revolutionary America. The disestablishment of the churches and the concept of separation of church and state were sources of concern to many people. Thomas Jefferson's strong stand on the separation of church and state and his election to the presidency in 1800 had religious conservatives worried that the nation was slipping into infidelity and religious neglect. Historian William McLaughlin suggests that the social function of revivalism, which flourished during this same period, was "to provide a unifying and self-restraining code of social and personal conduct for the average man . . . to provide that internalization of authority so essential to counter-balance the destruction of external authority in our culture."²⁷ Mormon historian Klaus Hansen observed that "Mormonism appeared on the American religious scene at precisely that moment when external religious authority, both intellectually and institutionally, was in headlong

retreat.”²⁸ Such an environment made the Mormon claim of restored authority all the more enticing, not just for Seekers.²⁹

The Campbellites responded to the unstable religious situation in America by calling on the Bible for authority in religious matters. The Mormons had a different response. On 16 November 1830 the *Painesville Telegraph* reported that the first Mormon missionaries to arrive in Ohio claimed special authority from God, that Oliver Cowdery, in particular, “holds forth that the ordinances of the gospel have not been regularly administered since the days of the apostles till the said Smith and himself commenced the work.” Ezra Booth, an early Mormon convert from Ohio, wrote in 1831 that Mormon baptism “is similar to other orders; only it is preface with—‘having authority given me of Jesus Christ.’”³⁰ While the early missionaries claimed unique authority, it is not clear what kind of authority was meant or the manner by which it was obtained.

By 1837, when former Seeker Edward Partridge wrote to his sister, Emily, Mormon authority was clearly lineal. After describing the manner in which the ancient apostles conferred authority on others, Partridge explained,

There is two ways to obtain authority to build up the kingdom of God, and they are these, either direct from God, or by the laying on of the hands of those who have authority. The authority from God, I say, has been lost for ages, consequently the religious world have divided, and subdivided untill the sects have become almost innumerable. . . . Now I say, that God has set his hand the second time to recover his people;—that he has sent forth Angels, and commissioned men, once more, to build up his kingdom.³¹

The early Mormon understanding of restored authority evolved as the events of the restoration unfolded. Because the earliest Mormon concept of apostasy held that the ancient church lost God’s authority when his spirit withdrew because of unbelief, the earliest Mormons conceived of restoration as a return of God’s spirit. Thus Joseph Smith and the early church placed greater emphasis on the charismatic, or spiritual, nature of restored authority than on its lineal or legal aspects. The exercise of authority in the church derived from the operation of the Holy Spirit rather than exclusively from ordination or as a function of church office.³² Only gradually did Mormonism’s description of apostasy, restoration, and authority become clearly lineal-legal. In addition, the concepts of “two orders of priesthood” and “lineal priesthood”

were not introduced into Mormonism until after its founding.³³ Joseph Smith, like other Seekers, seems to have been uncertain about the nature of the authority he had received and awaited further clarification through revelation.

Indeed, nothing in the Book of Mormon stipulates a lineal-legal notion of authority. The Book of Mormon's description of the apostasy did not include the charge that the latter-day clergy lacked priesthood authority. Rather, it indicted them with religious hypocrisy and spiritual poverty. Similarly, the Book of Mormon's description of the restoration included no promise of the return of priesthood authority but rather of spiritual renewal. The source of authority in the Book of Mormon is charismatic—ministers are to ordain and baptize by the power of the Holy Ghost. Ordination by the laying on of hands is practiced, but lineal succession is never emphasized.³⁴ The text of the Book of Mormon through 3 Nephi implies the possibility of a non-angelic restoration of authority.

Baptism and ordination are first mentioned in the Book of Mormon when Alma establishes "the church of Christ" in the wilderness near the "waters of Mormon." Alma, one of the "priests" of the wicked king Noah, had heard Book of Mormon prophet Abinadi's last sermon before his martyrdom and was converted. Alma and other believers flee into the wilderness, where Alma preaches the gospel as he heard it from Abinadi and invites listeners to be "baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before [God] that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments" (Mos. 18:10). Alma then takes Helam into the water, saying: "O Lord, pour out thy Spirit upon thy servant, that he may do this work with holiness of heart" (18:12). After this, "the Spirit of the Lord was upon him," and he says, "Helam, I baptize thee, having authority from the Almighty God, as a testimony that ye have entered into a covenant to serve him until you are dead as to the mortal body; and may the Spirit of the Lord be poured out upon you; and may he grant unto you eternal life, through the redemption of Christ, whom he has prepared from the foundation of the world" (18:13). Having said this, Alma immerses himself and Helam in the water at the same time (18:14–15). Alma also baptizes others but does not immerse himself.³⁵ He is the only one to baptize, although he ordains others "to preach unto [the people], and to teach them concerning the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (18:18). And "none received authority to preach or to teach except it were

by him [Alma] from God. Therefore he consecrated all their priests and all their teachers" (23:17). Thus even the legal claim of authority of the priests and teachers ultimately rested on Alma's charismatic reception of authority. Without benefit of foresight, Smith and Cowdery could have interpreted this as a description of one way in which the authority to baptize could be restored and the true church reestablished.

Shortly after the departure of Alma's group, the people rebel against King Noah and put his more righteous son Limhi in power. When Ammon comes upon the people of Limhi in the city of Nephi, he learns that they "were desirous to be baptized as a witness and a testimony that they were willing to serve God with all their hearts" (Mos. 21:35). "But there was none in the land that had authority from God," meaning spiritual authority like Alma's (21:33). "And Ammon declined doing this thing, considering himself an unworthy servant" (21:33). Significantly, Ammon worries about spiritual worthiness, not ordination. Limhi and his people "did not at that time form themselves into a church, waiting upon the Spirit of the Lord" (21:34).

Limhi and his people migrate *en masse* to the city of Zarahemla where they arrive about the same time as Alma's group. Both groups become the subjects of King Mosiah, who allows Alma to "establish churches throughout all the land of Zarahemla" and to "ordain priests and teachers over every church" (Mos. 25:19). Limhi and his people come forward and Alma baptizes them (25:18), which signified their membership in the church (25:23).

Before dying, Alma "confers" the office of high priest over the church upon his son Alma (Mos. 29:42). Alma the younger reports that his father "consecrated" him "to be a high priest over the church of God" (Al. 4:20, 5:31 13:1-19). This is the first account in the Book of Mormon of succession to church office. Alma the younger in turn "ordained priests and elders, by laying on his hands according to the order of God, to preside and watch over the church" (6:1). This is also the first instance in the Book of Mormon where laying on of hands is mentioned. Alma's sons (at least Helaman) apparently succeed him in the office of high priest over the church, and as a result the Nephite church (unlike its Jewish counterpart) soon has more than one high priest (Al. 43:1-2; 45:20-24; 46:6, 38; 49:30; 50:38; Hel. 3:25). Helaman and his brethren also "appointed priests and teachers throughout all the land, over all the churches" (Al. 45:23). But in each case

priests and teachers receive their calls directly from charismatic leaders. The spiritual experience of such leaders, which validates their spiritual authority, is always described—not their ordination lineage.

Later, the prophet Nephi is the first in the Book of Mormon to delegate the authority to baptize.³⁶ He “went forth among the people, and also many others, baptizing unto repentance, in the which there was a great remission of sins” (3 Ne. 1:23). Nephi also “ordained . . . men unto this ministry, that all such as should come unto them should be baptized with water” (7:25). When Jesus appears in America, one of his first actions is to recommission Nephi and others to baptize: “I give unto you power that ye shall baptize this people when I am again ascended into heaven. And again the Lord called others, and said unto them likewise; and he gave unto them power to baptize” (3 Ne. 11:21–22). The “power” to baptize is given by oral command, not physical ordination. Prior to Jesus’ appearance, baptism is “unto repentance,” but afterwards it is baptism in Jesus’ own name to distinguish between the old and new covenants.³⁷ Nephi thus allows himself to be rebaptized before he begins baptizing others (19:10–12).

Unlike the bestowal of authority to baptize, Jesus gives the gift of the Holy Ghost through physical contact (see 3 Ne. 18:36–38). According to Moroni, when Jesus lays hands on the twelve Nephite disciples, he says: “Ye shall call on the Father in my name, in mighty prayer; and after ye have done this ye shall have power that to him upon whom ye shall lay your hands, ye shall give the Holy Ghost” (Moro. 2:2). Notice that this “power” comes through prayer, not by right of priesthood ordination. Authority is also passed on charismatically. Elders ordained priests and teachers “by the power of the Holy Ghost, which was in them” (Moro. 3:4).

Authority in the early Mormon church was originally patterned on a similar model of charismatic or spiritual power, not on priesthood ordination.³⁸ When Lucy Smith wrote to her brother in 1831, she spoke of the apostasy and restoration of the gospel, but she never legitimized her son’s claims by declaring a restoration of priesthood. Even years later she made no reference to angelic ordination in her account of the restoration of authority to baptize. Instead, she reported that Joseph and Oliver Cowdery had received authority by commandment. “One morning,” she recalled, “they sat down to their work, as usual, and the first thing which presented itself through the Urim and Thummim,

was a commandment for Joseph and Oliver to repair to the water, and attend to the ordinance of Baptism. They did so . . . they had now received authority to baptize.”³⁹ This description does not preclude angelic ordination, but even if she knew about the appearance of John the Baptist, as later told by Joseph Smith, Lucy nevertheless did not think it was an essential detail to validate her son’s new authority.

Neither did Joseph Smith’s early revelations mention angelic ordination. In June 1829, the month following their baptism, a revelation reminded Cowdery, “thou hast been baptized by the hand of my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., according to that which I have commanded him, he hath fulfilled the thing which I commanded him” (D&C 18:7). When the Church of Christ was organized on 6 April 1830, Smith received a revelation declaring that he should be “called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ, being inspired of the Holy Ghost to lay the foundation thereof” (D&C 21:1–2). “It behooveth me,” the Lord told Oliver Cowdery, through Joseph Smith, “that he [Smith] should be ordained by you, Oliver Cowdery mine apostle” (D&C 21:10). This revelation reiterated the commandment which had been previously received “in the chamber of old Father Peter Whitmer, in Fayette, Seneca county [New York],” which commanded Smith and Cowdery to ordain one another elders at the anticipated organization of the church.⁴⁰

The revelation on church organization and government given in June 1830 also emphasized the “commandment,” stating that the church had been “regularly organized and established . . . by the will and commandments of God . . . which commandments were given to Joseph, who was called of God and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of this church; and also to Oliver, who was also called of God an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of this church, and ordained under his [Joseph’s] hand” (BoFC 24:2–4/ D&C 20:1–3). This document further emphasized charismatic authority, stating that church officers were to be “ordained by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is in the one who ordains him” (D&C 20:60). One might expect that the revelation setting up church government would refer to the angelic restoration of authority. Instead, the preamble to the document mentions only the visit of Moroni, who “gave unto him [Smith] commandments which inspired him” (D&C 20:5–12). Thus the authority by which

Smith organized the Church of Christ was rooted in commandment from God and charisma.

Not only is angelic ordination absent from church records before the latter part of 1832, but early leading members made statements that they were never told of the angelic source of the authority they were given. In fact, it never occurred to them at the time that angelic ordinations were essential for the restoration of authority. David Whitmer, for example, testified: "I never heard that an angel had ordained Joseph and Oliver to the Aaronic priesthood until the year 1834 5 or 6."⁴¹ William E. McLellin, who joined the church in 1831, also wrote: "I never heard of John the Baptist ordaining Joseph and Oliver. I heard not of James, Peter, and John doing so."⁴² Although McLellin heard Smith tell the story of the rise of the church "probably more than twenty times" in the early days of Mormonism, McLellin said, "I never heard of . . . John, or Peter, James and John."⁴³ Not only did McLellin say he never heard the stories of angelic ordination, but in 1872 he argued that they never occurred: "An angel never ordained a man to any office since the world began. Then say you how did Joseph and Oliver get authority to start? I answer, that a revelation from the Lord gives a man both power and authority to do whatever it commands. The Lord commanded Joseph to baptize, confirm, and ordain Oliver, then Oliver to do the same for him. This was legal and valid."⁴⁴

Early Mormons soon faced challenges common to groups based on charismatic authority. The dangers for Mormons of such unrestrained charisma have been described by Catholic sociologist Thomas F. O'Dea:

Since the new church had been founded upon the claims of contemporary revelation, such revelation remained the basis of all its ecclesiastical authority. This meant that there were two possible paths of development open for the church. It could permit unrestrained prophecy and thereby splinter into smaller and smaller groups, finally breaking up into a Babel of private revelation. On the other hand, it could restrain prophetic gifts, restricting revelation and prophecy to one man, and develop a centrally directed organization about that one leader. Compromises between the two positions were, of course, possible but were likely to be unstable, at least until original enthusiasm had dissipated itself. If more than one strong prophetic figure claimed revelation, it is hard to see how schism could have been avoided. The ideal of left-wing

Protestantism as set forth in the *Book of Mormon* . . . portrayed a profusion of prophecy and a plurality of prophets, combined with the ecumenical aspiration of one church united around that prophetic authority. Such an ideal was clearly impossible in real life.⁴⁵

Mormonism's vulnerability to internal challenges based on claims of charismatic authority manifested itself early on. One of the first such threats came in September 1830 when Hiram Page, one of the eight special Book of Mormon witnesses and a "teacher" in the church, received revelations through a "stone" about "the upbuilding of Zion, the order of the Church, etc." "All of which," Smith later wrote, "were entirely at variance with the order of God's house, as laid down in the New Testament, as well as in our late revelations." This challenge troubled Smith, since many members of his new church believed Page's revelations, including Oliver Cowdery and the Whitmer family.⁴⁶ Such influence by a "teacher" indicates that a hierarchical concept of church government had yet to be worked out. However, Smith soon received a revelation which declared that Page's revelations were devil-inspired and that only Smith could receive revelation for the church (D&C 28).

The early Mormon converts in Ohio were also given to spiritual excesses. Early Mormon historian John Whitmer described how easily this small group of about three hundred followers of charismatic authority could be led astray. Satan, according to Whitmer, "took a notion to blind the minds of some of the weaker ones, and made them think that an angel of the Lord appeared to them and showed them writings on the outside cover of the Bible, and on parchment, which flew through the air, and on the back of their hands, and many such foolish and vain things—others lost their strength, and some slid on the floor, and such like maneuvers, which proved greatly to the injury of the cause."⁴⁷

In February 1831, a woman by the name of Hubble, a self-proclaimed prophetess who received "many revelations," deceived enough members that Smith found it "necessary to inquire of the Lord" concerning her.⁴⁸ The response from God was again that only Smith could receive revelation for the church (D&C 43). Ezra Booth wrote in 1831 that Hubble "so ingratiated herself into the esteem and favor of some of the Elders, that they received her, as a person commissioned to act a conspicuous part in Mormonizing the world. Rigdon, and some others, gave her the right hand of fellowship . . . but Smith, viewing her as an encroachment upon

his sacred premises, declared her an imposter, and she returned to the place from whence she came. Her visit, however, made a deep impression on the minds of many, and the barbed arrow which she left in the hearts of some, is not yet eradicated."⁴⁹

Smith himself later recalled the confused situation which existed in the early days of the church:

Soon after the gospel was established in Kirtland, and during the absence of the authorities of the church, many false spirits were introduced, many strange visions were seen, and wild enthusiastic notions were entertained; men ran out of doors under the influence of this spirit, and some of them got upon the stumps of trees and shouted, and all kinds of extravagances were entered into by them . . . and many ridiculous things were entered into, calculated to bring disgrace upon the church of God.

Smith also remembered that there were many "brethren and sisters that have had written revelations, and have started forward to lead the church. Such was a young boy in Kirtland. . . . The boy is now living with his parents, who have submitted to the laws of the church." Smith found that these independent revelations were calculated "to cause the spirit of God to be withdrawn; and to uproot and destroy those glorious principles which had been developed for the salvation of the human family."⁵⁰

Levi Hancock recalled that Heman Basset, an early Mormon convert in Kirtland, received a revelation from an angel.⁵¹ George A. Smith reported that one "Black Pete" claimed to receive heavenly messages written on objects floating across the sky, and that Wycom Clark "got a revelation that he was to be the prophet," persuading five others to start the "Pure Church of Christ." John Noah also "assumed to be a prophet" and was excommunicated.⁵²

Former Methodist preacher and early Mormon apostate Ezra Booth described the effects of charismatic authority in Ohio and Joseph Smith's efforts to combat it: "Mormonism has in part changed its character, and assumed a different dress, from that under which it made its first appearance on the Western Reserve." The religious enthusiasm and the charismatic sources of authority had "vanished out of sight," according to Booth, but they stood "as the principal foundation of the faith of several hundred of the members of their church." Booth explained that commissions to preach had been received from heaven, written on the palms of

hands and the lids of Bibles. "These commissions, when transcribed upon a piece of paper, were read to the church, and the persons who had received them, were ordained to the Elder's office, and sent out into the world to preach."⁵³

As Joseph Smith moved to contain spiritual manifestations and to secure his leadership, he was criticized by David Whitmer and others for being misled by Sidney Rigdon to stray from the Book of Mormon's ideal of charismatic-based authority. By 1836 Smith had placed limitations on personal revelation among the rank and file and established a hierarchy that could maintain order. As O'Dea has noted, "even the overwhelming unpopularity that he [Smith] experienced after the Kirtland bank failure of 1837 could not upset what had been accomplished." By the time of his death, continued O'Dea, "charisma had been successfully contained within the organized structure of the church and identified with the functions of church office."⁵⁴

In May 1831 Joseph Smith had dictated a revelation which approved of spiritual gifts but also set up safeguards by explaining the proper role of such gifts in the restored church:

There are many spirits which are false spirits, which have gone forth in the earth, deceiving the world. And also Satan hath sought to deceive you, that he might overthrow you. Behold, I, the Lord, have looked upon you, and have seen abominations in the church that profess my name. . . . There are hypocrites among you, who have deceived some, which has given the adversary power; but behold such shall be reclaimed; but the hypocrites shall be detected and shall be cut off . . . from my church. . . . That which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness. That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day. . . . If you behold a spirit manifested that you cannot understand, and you receive not that spirit, ye shall ask of the Father in the name of Jesus; and if he give not unto you that spirit, then you may know that it is not of God (D&C 50:2-4, 7-8, 23-24, 31).

When Jared Carter and Sylvester Smith visited members in Amherst, Ohio, in mid-1831 and observed their spiritual excesses, they attempted to counsel them according to the May 1831 revelation. However, not all the members accepted their instruction.⁵⁵

The revelation mentioned excommunication as the spiritual weapon to combat spiritual excesses (D&C 50:6-9), and Smith

later told that this tool was utilized in maintaining order: "Those members that were exercised with it [a false spirit] were tried for their fellowship; and those that would not repent and forsake it were cut off. . . . The spirit was rebuked, and put down, and those who would not submit to rule and good order, were disfellowshipped."⁵⁶ On 17 February 1834, the Kirtland high council was organized. Its first recorded trial addressed the spiritual excesses of Curtis Hodges, Sr., a former Methodist, who repented of his error.⁵⁷

Printing Smith's revelations helped to stabilize and centralize authority in the church. The communications Smith had received from God giving his revelations eminence above the revelations of other church members were especially important. Publication of the revelations would not only strengthen Smith's own leadership position but facilitate the codification of early Mormon group behavior; the printed revelations became the "law" by which church councils could try persons for their membership and the justification for disciplinary measures taken. In addition, printing the revelations was a necessary step in the legalization and institutionalization of restored authority.

According to David Whitmer, some of the early brethren objected to printing Smith's revelations. "In the spring of 1832 [more likely 1831], in Hiram, Ohio, Brothers Joseph and Sydney, and others, concluded that the revelations should be printed in a book. A few of the brethren—including myself—objected to it seriously."⁵⁸ In November 1831, William E. McLellin led one group which objected to making the revelations "law and commandments" (D&C 43:8), citing the weak language of the revelations as the principal reason for their objection.⁵⁹

But on 20 November 1831, John Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery left Ohio with the manuscript revelations and arrived in Independence, Missouri, on 5 January 1832, intending to publish them.⁶⁰ That June the first issue of the Mormon newspaper *The Evening and the Morning Star* appeared in Independence and included the text of "The Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ" (now section 20). Each month thereafter the newspaper published the complete text of another revelation or portion of a revelation, and slow progress was made toward printing a compilation of all the revelations, until July 1833 when the press was destroyed by a mob. The unfinished sheets of the Book of Commandments were salvaged from the destroyed printing office and assembled and used by some of the elders.⁶¹

In December 1833, when the church's printing establishment was moved to Kirtland, Ohio, *The Evening and the Morning Star* continued under Oliver Cowdery's editorship. In the last issue of September 1834, Cowdery announced that the entire *Star* would be reprinted but that typographical and other errors would be corrected. Even the revelations which were published in the *Star*, according to Cowdery, contained "many errors, typographical, and others, occasioned by transcribing manuscripts." "But as we shall have access to originals," he said, "we shall endeavor to make proper corrections."⁶² Cowdery's reprints, however, included additions and deletions not found in either the manuscript revelations or the original *Star*.

By October 1833 efforts were underway to have the corrected revelations finally published in book form, this time at Kirtland. The project reached fruition with the publication of the Doctrine and Covenants in 1835.

Such moves to contain charismatic excesses and to stabilize doctrine and governance of the church can be seen as signs of a refining or even redefining of the notion of authority which was occurring in the nascent Mormon movement. The "Protestant" notion of authority, emphasizing inner call and spirituality, was being transformed into a more "Catholic" one, emphasizing physical ordination and lineal priesthood.⁶³

Challenges to charismatic authority also generated an institutionalization of authority and the stratification of church offices. As institutional sources of authority developed during the early phases of Mormonism, challenges became less threatening. The new administrative structure discouraged usurpers. Stratification and institutionalization created a context for authority. Once authority had been confined within institutional boundaries, those who participated in the system were encouraged to preserve it, for the authority of those at lower levels rested on the legitimacy of the authority of those at the top. The development of authority began in June 1831 with the addition of the "high priesthood" and culminated in April 1836 with the angelic commissions of Elias, Moses, and Elijah in the Kirtland temple. With each successive endowment of power, Joseph Smith moved further out of reach of usurpers.

As Smith prepared to move from New York to Ohio in January 1831, it was revealed that greater authority was yet to be given before the new gospel could be taken to the world. In December 1830 Smith had dictated a revelation which commanded the

church to “assemble together at the Ohio” (D&C 37:3). When some members questioned this commandment, Smith received another revelation explaining that the gathering was necessary “that ye might escape the power of the enemy” and promised that “there you shall be endowed with power from on high. And from thence, whosoever I will shall go forth among all nations . . . for Israel shall be saved” (38:31–33).

The first major step toward stratification of church authority came at a conference in June 1831 in Kirtland when Smith introduced and ordained several men to the “high priesthood.” Prior to June 1831 the only major division of authority was between elders—the charismatic leaders—and all others (see D&C 20:1–12, 38–45; 21:1–12; also chap. 6), nor did members recognize two priesthoods within the church. In 1832 Smith called these two priesthoods “the holy Priesthood”—the offices of deacon, teacher, priest, and elder—and “the high Priesthood” (sometimes called the Melchizedek Priesthood)—the office of high priest. At this point there was not yet a notion of “Aaronic” priesthood, and the offices of elder and high priest were conceived as offices within two different priesthoods. (Not until 22 September 1832 would the office of elder be included in the high priesthood [D&C 84].) Also there was not yet a concept that angelic ordination was needed to initiate the authority to ordain others to the high priesthood. Rather, on 6 December 1832, Smith dictated a revelation in which he was told that “the [high] priesthood hath continued through the lineage of your fathers—for ye are lawful heirs, according to the flesh, and have been hid from the world with Christ in God—therefore your life and the priesthood have remained, and must needs remain through you and your lineage” (D&C 86:8–10).⁶⁴

This early Mormon notion of priesthood seems congruent with that described in the Book of Mormon, which speaks of a high priesthood but mentions no need for angelic ordination. Alma’s discourse on the priesthood of Melchizedek emphasizes foreordination rather than physical earthly ordination. Alma explains: “I would that ye should remember that the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order, which was after the order of his Son. . . . And this is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God” (Al. 13:1, 3).⁶⁵

In 1832 Smith began emphasizing the lineal and legal aspects of priesthood restoration. That year he visited church members

in Missouri for the second time and encountered disputations centering on authority and priority of leadership. Smith later noted that the distance between the two church centers in 1831 created a "critical moment" in the history of the movement.⁶⁶ Chief among Smith's concerns was Edward Partridge, who had been appointed Bishop of the church in February 1831 and was presiding over the church in Missouri. According to Ezra Booth, Partridge was concerned that not all of Smith's revelations seemed to have been divinely inspired.⁶⁷

Soon after arriving in Missouri during his first visit in the summer of 1831, Smith heard colleague Sidney Rigdon at a conference in Kaw Township exhort Bishop Edward Partridge to be obedient to "the requisition of Heaven."⁶⁸ Rigdon felt that Partridge was overstepping the limits of his authority. After Smith's departure, the Missouri church held a conference on 10 March 1832 and heard charges against Partridge, including his "having insulted the Lord's prophet in particular & assumed authority over him in open violation of the Laws of God."⁶⁹ The office of bishop was new, and perhaps Partridge, like Bishop Newel K. Whitney in Ohio, "thought like the Catholics and Episopalians [that] a Bishop was the highest office in the church"—or at least the church in Missouri.⁷⁰ Thus Smith and Partridge may have engaged in a dispute over jurisdiction. At this time, however, Partridge humbled himself and asked for forgiveness.

After returning to Ohio, Smith received a revelation which declared that Partridge "hath sinned, and Satan seeketh to destroy his soul" (D&C 64:17). Smith also dictated a revelation in November 1831 which more clearly defined the relationship between his new role as "President of the High Priesthood" and "the office of bishop." The revelation, addressed "to the church of Christ in the land of Zion," explained:

It must needs be that one be appointed of the High Priesthood to preside over the priesthood, and he shall be called President of the High Priesthood of the Church; or, in other words, the Presiding High Priest over the High Priesthood of the Church. From the same comes the administering of ordinances and blessings upon the church, by the laying on of the hands. Wherefore, the office of a bishop is not equal unto it; for the office of a bishop is in administering all temporal things; nevertheless a bishop must be chosen from the High Priesthood. . . . Wherefore, now let every man learn

his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence (D&C 107:59, 65–69).⁷¹

In April 1832, Smith again visited the Saints in Missouri, otherwise, God told him, “Satan seeketh to turn their hearts away” (D&C 78:9–10). The possible apostasy of the Missouri church and loss of the designated land of Zion was a disturbing thought to church leaders in Ohio. The record of the meeting in Missouri reports that “Joseph Smith Jr. [was] acknowledged by the High Priests in the land of Zion to be President of the High Priesthood, according to the commandment and ordination in Ohio, at the Conference held in Amherst January 25[,] 1832. And the right hand of fellowship [was] given him by the Bishop Edward Partridge in the land of Zion in the name of the Church. . . . All differences [were] settled & the hearts of all run together in love.”⁷²

But by the time Smith had returned to Ohio in July 1832, the Missouri church was again in discord. A letter from William W. Phelps describing these problems was awaiting Smith when he arrived in Ohio. On 31 July 1832, Smith wrote to Phelps to “tell Bro[ther] Edward [Partridge] it is very dangerous for men who have received the light he has received to be a seeking after a sign, for there shall no sign be given for a sign except as it was in the days of Lot. God sent angels to gather him & his family out of Sodom while the wicked were destroyed by a devouring fire behold this is an exsample [sic].”⁷³ Apparently, Partridge had renewed his challenge to Smith’s authority.

The leaders of the church in Kirtland continued to receive letters from the Missouri church containing “low, dark, and blind insinuations.” In response, Orson Hyde and Hyrum Smith—representing a conference of twelve high priests in Kirtland—wrote to their Missouri brethren on 14 January 1833:

At the time Joseph [Smith], Sidney [Rigdon], and Newel [Whitney] left Zion, all matters of hardness and misunderstanding were settled and buried (as they supposed), and you gave them the hand of fellowship; but, afterwards, you brought up all these things again, in a censorious spirit, accusing Brother Joseph in rather an indirect way of seeking after monarchical power and authority. This came to us in Brother Corroll’s letter of June 2nd. We are sensible that this is not the thing Brother Joseph is seeking after, but to magnify the high office and calling whereunto he has been called and appointed by the command of God, and the united voice of this Church.⁷⁴

In the midst of these challenges (sometime between 20 July and 27 November 1832), Smith began preparing an account of his early history and the rise of the church.⁷⁵ In the preamble to this 1832 history, Smith wrote for the first time of angelic ministration—an account which certainly impressed Partridge and other former Seekers:

A History of the life of Joseph Smith Jr. An account of his marvilous experience and of all the mighty acts which he doeth in the name of Jesus Ch[r]ist the son of the Living God of whom he beareth record. Also an account of the rise of the Church of Christ in the eve of time according as the Lord brought forth and established by his hand. Firstly, he receiv[ing] the testamony from on high. Secondly, the ministring of Angels. Thirdly, the reception of the Holy Priesthood by the ministring of Angels to admin[i]ster the letter of the Gospel[,] the Law and commandments as they were given unto him[,] and the ordinanc[e]s. Fo[u]rthly, a confirmation and reception of the High Priesthood after the Holy Order of the Son of the Living God [with] power and ordinance[s] from on high to preach the Gospel in the administration and demonstration of the spirit, the Kees of the Kingdom of God conferred upon him and the continuation of the blessings of God to him &c.⁷⁶

Though this account adds the detail about “the ministring of Angels,” it is otherwise congruent with the notion of two priesthoods introduced in June 1831. The first priesthood is called “the Holy Priesthood” and is said to have come “by the ministring of Angels.” Nothing is said about the identity of the angels nor the date of the event. This first priesthood gave Smith power to “admin[i]ster the letter of the Gospel”—“the Law and commandments as they were given unto him”—and also to administer “the ordinanc[e]s.” The reception of the second priesthood is described as a “confirmation”—no angels are mentioned. This priesthood gave Smith authority “to preach the Gospel in the administration and demonstration of the spirit.” This apparently refers to the reception of the “high Priesthood” at the June 1831 conference. This first attempt by Smith to write his history remained unfinished and unpublished.

In September 1832, about the same time he was working on his history, Smith received a revelation which again contained a reference to angelic ordination and also added significant new details to the early Mormon understanding of priesthood (D&C

84). The high priesthood introduced in June 1831 had been associated with Melchizedek.⁷⁷ In the new revelation, the office of elder was linked for the first time with the high priesthood and was also associated with Melchizedek (84:14, 29). A “lesser priesthood,” resembling that which was “confirmed” upon Aaron, was also mentioned (84:6–18). Thus for the first time the greater priesthood was associated with Melchizedek and the lesser priesthood with Aaron. The revelation informed the early church that the sons of Moses received the “greater priesthood” through a lineage which included Melchizedek. This emphasis on priesthood lineage was also new.

The idea that the Levitical priesthood of the Old Testament had been restored to Mormons was no doubt the most controversial element in the revelation. Mainline Protestants believed that the need for the old priesthood had ended with the conclusion of the old covenant at the death of Jesus. Even David Whitmer later criticized Smith for introducing into Mormonism both the “two orders of priesthood” and the “lineal priesthood of the old law.” This revelation on priesthood (D&C 84) was probably one of the revelations Whitmer had in mind when he suggested that Sidney Rigdon “explained these things to Brother Joseph in his way, out of the old Scriptures, and got Brother Joseph to inquire, etc. He would inquire, and as mouth piece speak out the revelations just as they had it fixed up in their hearts.”⁷⁸ It is difficult to determine how much influence, if any, Rigdon had on Smith, but Whitmer’s impression was no doubt encouraged by the fact that the revelation on priesthood occurred during the same period that Smith and Rigdon were working together on the “Inspired Translation of the Bible.”⁷⁹

The revelation anticipated criticism regarding the restoration of an Old Testament priesthood and alluded to the promise in Exodus 40:15 that Aaron’s sons would be given “an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations.” According to the revelation, “the Lord confirmed a priesthood also upon Aaron and his seed, throughout all their generations, which priesthood also continueth and abideth forever with the priesthood which is after the holiest order of God” (84:18). It also seemed to allude to the Lord’s promise in Malachi 3:3 to “purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.” The revelation thus predicted the fulfilling of this promise: “the sons of Moses and also the

sons of Aaron shall offer an acceptable offering and sacrifice in the house of the Lord" (84:31).

According to the revelation, John the Baptist in addition to being "filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb" was also "ordained by the angel of God at the time he was eight days old unto this power, to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews" (D&C 84:27-28). This was, then, a precedent for priesthood restoration. What the revelation did not suggest, however, was that angelic ordination had restored priesthood to the Mormon movement. Rather it stated that Mormons had a right to these two priesthoods because they had become the sons of Moses and Aaron through the "renewing of their bodies" by the spirit (84:31-34).

By 1834 difficulties were still pressing against the church in Missouri. Trouble with neighbors escalated to armed skirmishes, and a militia of Mormons from Ohio failed to return the Saints to their Missouri lands. Smith's charismatic powers were again challenged. Against this backdrop, Smith renewed his efforts to lay before the Saints the true source of his authority. At one meeting, held on 21 April 1834 in Norton, Ohio, Smith "gave a relation of obtaining and translating the Book of Mormon, the revelation of the Priesthood of Aaron, the organization of the Church in 1830, the revelation of the High Priesthood, and the gift of the Holy Ghost poured out upon the Church."⁸⁰ Although the "high priesthood" had been visible in the church before the lower priesthood, Mormons now learned that the priesthood of Aaron had been received first, in conformity with the descriptions of priesthood authority in section 84. Discussion of the high priesthood still failed to mention Peter, James, and John.

Oliver Cowdery wrote a letter to William W. Phelps on 7 September 1834 describing the angel's visit to Smith and himself. When published in the *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* in October 1834, this letter became the first published announcement that the priesthood had been restored through angelic ordination. Cowdery hoped, he wrote, that his account of early church history would "prove *especially* beneficial . . . by confirming [Phelps and the Missouri church] in the faith of the gospel":

On a sudden, as from the midst of eternity, the voice of the Redeemer spake peace to us, while the vail was parted and the angel of God came down clothed with glory . . . his voice, though mild, pierced to the center, and his words, "I am thy fellow servant," dispelled every fear. . . . We received under

his hand the holy priesthood, as he said, "upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer this priesthood and this authority, which shall remain upon earth, that the sons of Levi may yet offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness!"⁸¹

According to Cowdery, the angel himself alluded to Malachi 3:3. Although the reference to "the sons of Levi" might imply a connection to Aaron, Cowdery only refers to the "holy priesthood."

Not until September and October 1835, a year later, as he copied blessings into a patriarchal blessing book, did Cowdery give an account of the visit of the ancient apostles—Peter, James, and John. In the introduction to the blessing Smith had given him in 1833, and which he was now copying into the blessing book, Cowdery wrote that Smith was "ordained by the angel John, unto the lesser or Aaronic Priesthood, in company with myself." "After this," Cowdery continued, "we received the high and holy priesthood."⁸² The blessing itself, according to Cowdery's 1835 copy, promised:

These blessings shall come upon him [Oliver] according to the blessings of the prophecy of Joseph in ancient days, which he said should come upon the seer of the last days and the scribe that should sit with him, and that should be ordained with him, by the hands of the angel in the bush, unto the lesser priesthood, and after receive the holy priesthood under the hand of those who had been held in reserve for a long season, even those who received it under the hand of the Messiah, while he should dwell in the flesh upon the earth, and should receive the blessings with him, even the seer of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saith he, even Joseph of old.⁸³

Although the original blessing is not extant, comparison of other blessings with those copied into the patriarchal blessing book indicates that "Cowdery greatly expanded the blessings beyond their contents as initially recorded."⁸⁴

The interest in the ancient patriarchs, evident in both Cowdery's introduction and his version of the blessing, had no doubt been inspired by the church's acquisition of Egyptian papyri in July 1835. By December 1835, Cowdery was publicly stating that the papyri contained "the writings of Abraham and Joseph" and gave preliminary observations about their content.⁸⁵ The blessing did not yet indicate when the apostles, as yet unnamed, delivered the "holy priesthood" to Smith and Cowdery, but the phrase

“high and holy priesthood” in Cowdery’s introduction suggested a connection to the high priesthood introduced at the June 1831 conference.⁸⁶

Preparing the manuscripts in the months before the 1835 printing of the Doctrine and Covenants, Smith added phrases which had not appeared in earlier versions of several revelations—including details about angelic ordination and the visit of Peter, James, and John. To section 5 (dated March 1829), Smith added the words “hereafter you shall be ordained and go forth and deliver my words unto the children of men” (v. 6) and “you must wait yet a little while, for ye are not yet ordained” (v. 17). To section 7 (dated April 1829), he added “I [Jesus] will make thee [Peter] to minister for him [John] and for thy brother James; and unto you three I will give this power and the keys of this ministry until I come” (v. 7). To section 27 (dated September 1830), he added “John [the Baptist] I have sent unto you, my servants, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Oliver Cowdery, to ordain you unto the first priesthood which you have received, that you might be called and ordained even as Aaron . . . and also . . . Peter, and James, and John, whom I have sent unto you, by whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles, and especial witnesses of my name, and bear the keys of your ministry and of the same things which I revealed unto them; unto whom I have committed the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times” (vv. 8, 12–13).

On 1 August 1842, Smith published in the *Times and Seasons* another installment of his personal history in which he gave an account of his and Cowdery’s reception of the priesthood. However, Smith’s account differs from Cowdery’s in that the angel specifically names the priesthood and describes the nature of its authority. In Smith’s account the angel is identified as John the Baptist, who declares:

Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion, for the remission of sins, and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.⁸⁷

Perhaps explaining the late public disclosure of this angelic ordination, Smith writes that he and Cowdery “were forced to keep

the circumstances of having received the Priesthood and our having been baptized, owing to a spirit of persecution which had already manifested itself in the neighborhood.”⁸⁸

In his 1838 history, Smith referred only in passing to Peter, James, and John. He reported that at the time he and Cowdery received the Aaronic Priesthood, the Baptist told them that “he acted under the direction of Peter, James and John who held the keys of the Priesthood of Melchizedek, which Priesthood he said would in due time be conferred on us, and that I should be called the first Elder of the Church, and he [Oliver Cowdery] the second.”⁸⁹

The introduction of the concept of lineal religious authority made it easier to thwart usurpers and pretenders. The claim of uninterrupted succession of ordinations back to one who had undisputed authority was a stabilizing force. The Kirtland temple, which was dedicated in 1836, can be seen as a symbol of the accommodation of hierarchy and charisma which Mormonism had achieved by that point.

On the one hand, the dedication of the temple occasioned a renewed outpouring of charismatic, spiritual power. Milton V. Backman, Jr., has described this period as the “Pentecostal Season” of Mormon history. “During a fifteen-week period, extending from January 21 to May 1, 1836,” Backman writes, “probably more Latter-day Saints beheld visions and witnessed other unusual spiritual manifestations than during any other era in the history of the Church.”⁹⁰ Commenting on this period of church history, Smith called it “a Pentecost and an endowment indeed.”⁹¹

On Sunday, 27 March 1836, nearly a thousand Mormons crowded into the temple for its dedication. During the meeting some received wonderful manifestations. According to the official account, Frederick G. Williams testified that an angel sat next to him during the prayer; David Whitmer said he saw several angels; Brigham Young spoke in tongues; and David W. Patten interpreted and also spoke in tongues.⁹²

That same evening, at a closed meeting of the priesthood quorums, Smith instructed his followers to “not quench the Spirit, for the first one that opens his mouth shall receive the Spirit of prophecy.” According to Smith’s account, “George A. Smith arose and began to prophesy, when a noise was heard like the sound of a rushing mighty wind, which filled the Temple, and all the

congregation simultaneously arose, being moved by an invisible power; many began to speak in tongues and prophesy; others saw glorious visions; and I beheld the Temple was filled with angels, which fact I declared to the congregation.”⁹³

However, even as the dedication of the temple occasioned this renewal of pentecostal and charismatic fervor, it also underscored the ordered environment in which such fervor might be more or less safely allowed. For the dedication of the temple was also an occasion for the assertion of legalistic or institutional authority. The two priesthoods and their various ranks of authority were clearly displayed for all to see. Pulpits in three rows of ascending height had been erected at opposite ends of the temple, where the presidencies of the various quorums of the priesthood sat.⁹⁴ During the conference, each of the presiding quorums and various presidents were presented for the sustaining vote of the membership. At this time, Smith reported, “I bore record of my mission, and of the ministration of angels.”⁹⁵ Thus each man knew his place in the power structure, as well as the limits of what was allowed in ecstatic experiences.

The following Sunday, 3 April 1836, the temple again filled with Saints, and Smith and Cowdery stepped behind the veils which had been lowered to conceal the pulpit at the front of the hall. According to Doctrine and Covenants 110, several visions opened to their view. First, Jesus Christ appeared, accepted the temple, and mentioned “the endowment with which my servants have been endowed in this house” (v. 9). Moses followed and gave them “the keys of the gathering of Israel” (v. 11). Elias then appeared and “committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham” (v. 12). Finally, Elijah appeared and declared he came “to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse.” He also announced that “the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors” (vv. 13–16).

Smith and Cowdery now held keys which were not shared by other priesthood officers. As joint presidents of the church, they were beyond the reach of usurpers. But this occasion could also have been read as a wonderful blending of the authority expectations of literalistic Seekers who were divided between spiritual endowment and angelic ministration.

— NOTES —

1. Historian Jan Shipps might as well be describing the differences between Campbellites and Seekers when she contrasts the restoration claims of Alexander Campbell's group and the Mormons: "It is important to note the difference between radical restoration movements, which make possible new beginnings in all the dimensions of religion—mythological, doctrinal, ritual, social, and experiential—and restoration movements, which, through processes of reformation, reinterpretation, and reintegration, revitalize religious traditions." *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 71–72.

2. "Celebrated as the era of Reformation is," Alexander Campbell wrote in 1824, "we doubt not but that the era of restoration will as far transcend it." *Christian Baptist* 2 (11 Sept. 1824): 136.

3. Thomas Collier, *The Marrow of Christianity* (London, 1647), 63; William Dell, *The Way of True Peace and Unity* (London, 1649), 19.

4. George Fox, *A Journal*, ed. William Penn (Philadelphia, 1831), 3:xvii, xviii.

5. *Wayne Sentinel*, 23 Feb. 1825. See also Erastus Hanchett, *A Serious Call in Christian Love* (Boston, [1825]), 6–8, 19.

6. [Asa Wild], *A Short Sketch of the Religious Experience, and Spiritual Travels, of Asa Wild, of Amsterdam, N. Y. Written by himself, by Divine Command, and the most infallible Inspiration* (Amsterdam, NY: printed for the author by D. Wells, 1824), 78.

7. *Ibid.*, 79.

8. *Wayne Sentinel*, 22 Oct. 1823.

9. John Saltmarsh, *Sparkles of Glory* (London, 1648), 292. This Seeker uncertainty about the nature of restored authority is also reflected in early Mormon convert John Murdock's comment that he had concluded prior to the arrival of the Mormon missionaries in the Ohio Reserve that "the Lord must either send an angel to baptise the first man, or he must give a special command to some one man to baptise another" (John Murdock Journal, 9, in Milton V. Backman, Jr., "The Quest for a Restoration: The Birth of Mormonism in Ohio," *Brigham Young University Studies* 12 [Summer 1972]: 362).

10. "The great Commotions[,] that which the most stir hath been about, is, the matter of Authority," Edward Gee, rector at Eccleston, wrote in 1658 (*The Divine and Originall of the Civill Magistrate from God Illustrated and Vindicated* [London, 1658], Preface [unpaginated], and Sec. 2; see also Ian Michael Smart, "Edward Gee and the Matter of Authority," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27 [April 1976]: 115–27). On the problems of religious authority during this period, see John M. Todd, ed., *Problems of Authority* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1962), and Gerald R. Cragg, *Freedom and Authority: A Study of English Thought in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975); Robert R. Orr, *Reason and Authority: The Thought of William Chillingworth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967); W. M. Southgate, *John Jewel and the Problem of Doctrinal Authority* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).

11. John Saltmarsh, *Groanes of Liberty* (London, 1646), Pt. 2 "The Beam of Light," 23; cf. John Saltmarsh, *Some Drops of the Vial* (London, 1646), 90.

12. Robert Bayllie, *Anabaptism, the True Fountaine of Independency, Brownisme, Antimony, Familisme, and the most of the other errours, which for the time doe trouble the Church of England, Unsealed* (London, 1647), 97.

13. [Richard Baxter], *Reliquiae Baxterianae: or, Mr. Richard Baxter's Narrative of the most Memorable Passages of His Life and Times*, ed. Matthew Sylvester (London, 1696), pt. 1, 76. Baxter's *Reliquiae Baxterianae* was completed about 1685 but not published until after his death in 1696. See also *The Safe Religion: or, Three Disputations For the Reformed Catholic Religion, Against Popery* (London, 1657), unpaginated Introduction; *A Second Sheet for the Ministry, Justifying our Calling Against Quakers, Seekers, and Papists, and all that deny us to be the Ministers of Christ* (London, 1657), 2; *The Successive Visibility of the Church of Which the Protestants are the soundest Members* (London, 1660), 26-27.

14. Baxter, *Second Sheet for the Ministry*, 13.

15. Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Appendix, 18-50; *Successive Visibility*, 355-62.

16. Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, pt. 2, 20.

17. *Ibid.*, 21-22.

18. *Ibid.*, 22.

19. Baxter, *Second Sheet for the Ministry*, 16.

20. *Ibid.*, A2.

21. John Saltmarsh, *Sparkles of Glory*, 292.

22. Thomas Lechford, "Note-Book Kept by Thomas Lechford, Esq., Lawyer, in Boston, Massachusetts Bay, from June 27, 1638 to July 29, 1641," *Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society* 7 (1885): 4, 47-50, 89, 275, 288.

23. John Cotton, *A Letter of Mr. John Cottons Teacher of the Church in Boston, in New England, to Mr. Williams a Preacher There* (London, 1643), 9.

24. Roger Williams, *The Hireling Ministry None of Christs* (London, 1652), 3, 4.

25. *Ibid.*, 17.

26. *Wayne Sentinel*, 22 Oct. 1823.

27. William G. McLaughlin, "Revivalism," in *The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth Century America*, ed. Edwin Scott Gaustad (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 129, 141.

28. Klaus Hansen, *Mormonism and the American Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 20.

29. See Mario S. DePillis, "The Quest for Religious Authority and the Rise of Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 1 (Spring 1966): 68-88.

30. In E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled [sic]: or, A Faithful Account of the That Singular Imposition and Delusion, from Its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, OH: E. D. Howe, 1834), 180.

31. Edward Partridge to Emily Dow, 12 Oct. 1837, in Warren A. Jennings, "'What Crime Have I Been Guilty Of?': Edward Partridge's Letter to

an Estranged Sister," *Brigham Young University Studies* 18 (Summer 1978): 525-26.

32. Although charismatic groups typically do not depend on a rigid hierarchy, they nonetheless are not undisciplined or entirely devoid of organization. See S. N. Eisenstadt, ed., *Max Weber and Institution Building* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 50. What I am arguing is a matter of degree and emphasis, not the exclusion of one aspect of authority over another.

33. David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, MO, 1887), 64.

34. This aspect of the Book of Mormon has also been noticed by G. St. John Stott, "Ordination and Ministry in the Book of Mormon," *Restoration Studies III*, Maurice L. Draper and Debra Combs, eds. (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1986), 244-53.

35. John Smyth, leader of a sect of English Separatists in Amsterdam, Holland, had been criticized for baptizing himself in 1609. See Henry Martyn Dexter, *The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1880; rep. Westmead, England: Gregg International Publishers, 1970), 319-20. Robert Richardson reported on several instances of "self-baptisms" during the early decades of the nineteenth century. "A certain John Moore . . . repairing one day to a stream of water in a secluded place, where he thought no human eye could see him, he went through the usual forms and immersed himself. This, indeed, is not, even in the United States, the only instance of an individual becoming, both religiously and etymologically, a *self-baptist*." *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 2 vols. (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1897-98), 1:457.

36. English Seeker John Jackson believed that authority to baptize could be delegated once the church had been established through charismatic leadership. See James A. Vendettuoli, "The English Seekers: John Jackson, the Principal Spokesman," Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1958, 154.

37. See Sidney B. Sperry, *Book of Mormon Compendium* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), 525-27. Sperry's observation is only partly correct. From Mosiah to 3 Nephi baptism is without exception "unto repentance." From the time of Jesus' ministry among the Nephites to Moroni baptism is in the name of Christ. (Only one exception occurs when Mormon argues against infant baptism, Moro. 8:11.) In 1 Nephi through Omni, the first quarter of the Book of Mormon, one would expect baptism to be "unto repentance." Instead, this section consistently states that baptism was in Christ's name. This is one of the results of the first part of the Book of Mormon being written last.

38. See A. Bruce Lindgren's introductory study, "The Development of the Latter Day Saint Doctrine of the Priesthood, 1829-1835," *Courage: A Journal of History, Thought and Action* 2 (Spring 1972): 439-43.

39. Lucy [Mack] Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations* (Liverpool: S. W. Richards, 1853), 131.

40. Joseph Smith, Jr., et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1964), 1:60-61, hereafter HC; and D&C 128:21.

41. Zenas H. Gurley, Jr., "Questions asked of David Whitmer at his home in Richmond Ray County Mo. Jan 14—1885," typescript at LDS church archives.

42. William E. McLellin to J. L. Traugbher, 25 Aug. 1877, in *Salt Lake Tribune*, 4 Dec. 1885.

43. *True L[tatter] D[ay] Saints' Herald* 17 (15 Sept. 1870): 556. See also William E. McLellin to Joseph Smith III, July 1872, RLDS church archives, Independence, Missouri, where McLellin states: "But as to the story of John the Baptist ordaining Joseph and Oliver on the day they were baptized: I never heard of it in the church for years, altho I carefully noticed things that were said." Also interesting in this connection is the letter McLellin wrote to his relatives in Carthage, Smith County, Tennessee, on 4 Aug. 1832, explaining his reasons for joining the Mormon church. While he describes the Moroni visits as well as several distinctive religious views of the church, including the saving ordinances, he does not mention the reception of priesthood authority. William E. McLellin to Samuel McLellin, RLDS church archives.

44. *True L[tatter] D[ay] Saints' Herald* 19 (1 Aug. 1872): 472.

45. Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 156.

46. HC 1:109–10.

47. John Whitmer, *An Early Latter Day Saint History: The Book of John Whitmer, Kept by Commandment*, F. Mark McKiernan and Roger D. Launius, eds. (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1980), 36.

48. *Ibid.*, 42; HC 1:154.

49. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 216. See Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 211–13.

50. Joseph Smith, "Try the Spirits," *Times and Seasons* 3 (1 April 1842): 747.

51. Autobiography of Levi Hancock, 41, in Milton V. Backman, Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830–1838* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983), 59–60.

52. In Brigham Young, et al., *Journal of Discourses of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 11:3–4, hereafter JD; also Smith, "Try the Spirits," 747.

53. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 183, 185. See also Whitmer, *Early Latter Day Saint History*, 36. Thomas Campbell, father of Alexander, spent the winter of 1830–31 in Mentor, Ohio, and on 4 February wrote a letter to Sidney Rigdon, complaining that Mormon claims to authority based on charismatic displays of spiritual revival were "in no wise superior to the pretensions of the first quakers, of the French Prophets, of the Shakers, of Jemima Wilkinson, &c." Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 121–22. See also Walter Wilson Jennings, *Origin and Early History of the Disciples of Christ with Special Reference to the Period Between 1809 and 1835* (Urbana, 1918), 295.

54. O'Dea, *The Mormons*, 159, 160.

55. Autobiography of Jared Carter, 4–5, in Backman, *Heavens Resound*, 62; also *Journal History*, July 1831.

56. Smith, "Try the Spirits," 747.

57. HC 2:33–34.

58. Whitmer, *Address to All Believers in Christ*, 54. Whitmer errors on the date of the conference. It was in November 1831, not 1832.

59. HC 1:226; D&C 67.

60. McKiernan and Launius, *An Early Latter Day Saint History*, 85. For confirmation of this date, see H. Michael Marquardt, "Early Text of Joseph Smith's Revelations, 1828-1833," *Restoration* 1 (July 1982):10n21.

61. Peter Crawley and Chad J. Flake, *Notable Mormon Books, 1830-1857* (Provo, UT: Friends of the Brigham Young University Library, 1974), 6; Peter Crowley, "Joseph Smith and A Book of Commandments," *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 42 (Autumn 1980): 18-32.

62. *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (Sept. 1834): 192.

63. Historian William D. Russell noted the stabilizing effect of Mormonism's present "Catholic" tendencies: "Latter Day Saint priesthood was a natural response to a historical situation in which traditional sources of authority in Christianity had been lost, and new sources of authority were needed to restrain the highly subjective and individualized form of Christianity that was developing in a new form of evangelism known as revivalism." William D. Russell, "The Latter Day Saint Priesthood: A Reflection of 'Catholic' Tendencies in Nineteenth Century American Religion," *Restoration Studies* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1980), 232-41.

64. Orson Pratt attempted to explain how Joseph Smith could see God in 1820 without the "high priesthood" (D&C 84:19-25) by claiming that he "had been already ordained before this world was made [Al. 13]" (JD 22:29).

65. The concept of certain individuals being foreordained to the high priesthood is not unlike the beliefs of the Ephrata Commune, a group of German mystics who settled near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in the 1720s. Their leader, Friedsam Gottrecht, was, as the tradition goes, "pre-ordained to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek." [Jacob Gass], *Chronicon Ephratense* (Lancaster, PA, 1889), 3. Gottrecht ordained others to the same priesthood. According to one account, in August 1740 the leader of the commune "solemnly consecrated Brothers Onesimus (Israel Eckerling), Jaebez (Peter Miller) and Enoch (Conrad Weiser) to the priesthood, by the laying on of hands; after which they were admitted to the ancient Order of Melchizedek by having the degree conferred on them in ancient form." Julius Friedrich Sachse, *The German Sectarians of Pennsylvania, 1708-1742: A Critical and Legendary History of the Ephrata Cloister and the Dunkers*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1899-1900), 1:386, in D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), 180.

66. Joseph Smith to W. W. Phelps, 31 July 1832, in Dean C. Jessee, comp. and ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 244.

67. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 202.

68. Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 9.

69. *Ibid.*, 41.

70. Edward Hunter, in Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 3 March 1877, in Dale Beecher, "The Office of Bishop," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15 (Winter 1982): 103. Hunter states that when Newel K. Whitney was called in December 1831 to the office of bishop, "he did not Know at the

time nor Joseph either what the position of a bishop was. Thought like the Catholics and Episcopalians a Bishop was the highest office in the church."

71. An early version of D&C 107:59-100 appears in the "Kirtland Revelation Book," [84-86], under the date Nov. 1831. On the dating of D&C 107:59-100, see Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith: A Historical and Biographical Commentary of the Doctrine and Covenants* (Provo, UT: Seventy's Mission Bookstore, 1981), 215-16, 326n1.

72. Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 44-45; HC 1:267.

73. Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 247.

74. HC 1:318.

75. See Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 3.

76. Scott H. Faulring, ed., *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), 3-4.

77. In Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 180.

78. Whitmer, *Address to All Believers in Christ*, 64.

79. Robert J. Matthews, "A Plainer Translation": *Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 36.

80. HC 2:52.

81. *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 1 (Oct. 1834): 13-16.

82. Patriarchal Blessing Book, 1:8-9, in Richard Lloyd Anderson, "The Second Witness of Priesthood Restoration," *Improvement Era*, Sept. 1968, 20; cf. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, ed. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-56), 3:100. This introduction was written by Oliver Cowdery in September 1835.

83. Patriarchal Blessing Book, 1:12, in Anderson, "Second Witness of Priesthood Restoration," 16; cf. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:101. Oliver Cowdery copied this blessing into the patriarchal blessing book on 2 October 1835; the original blessing was given on 18 December 1833.

84. Faulring, *American Prophet's Record*, 19n.

85. See *Messenger and Advocate* 2 (Dec. 1835): 233-36.

86. Linguistic affinity between Cowdery's introduction to his blessing and the Book of Abraham is clear. Cowdery states: "Our souls were drawn out in mighty prayer . . . and we diligently sought for the right of the fathers, and the authority of the holy priesthood, and the power to administer the same; for we desired to be followers of righteousness, even the knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God" (Patriarchal Blessing Book, 1:8-9). The Book of Abraham states: "I sought for the blessings, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge. . . . I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers" (1:2). Cowdery's language contributes to the impression that he was referring to the restoration of the high priesthood.

87. *Times and Seasons* 3 (1 Aug. 1842): 865-67; cf. HC 1:39. The angel's words were canonized in the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants (see D&C 13).

88. HC 1:43-44.

89. *Ibid.*, 40-41. Ambiguity in Smith's dating of the visit of Peter, James, and John has given rise to speculation that it actually occurred after the organization of the church. See HC 1:176n; JD 9:88-89; 10:303; Richard

L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 162–63, 240–41n55.

90. Backman, *Heavens Resound*, 285.

91. HC 2:432–33.

92. *Ibid.*, 427–78. Smith's description of spiritual manifestations is supported by others. See Backman, *Heavens Resound*, 284–309. The evidently subjective nature of these experiences is attested to by William E. McLellin, David Whitmer, and others, who (contradicting the official version) reported they had no such experiences and suggested that the others only imagined them. See *True L[atter] D[ay] Saints' Herald* 19 (15 July 1872): 437; *Ensign of Liberty*, March 1848, 6–7, 69; *Salt Lake Tribune*, 2 Dec. 1885; *The Des Moines Daily News*, 16 Oct. 1886; *The Return* 1 (June 1889).

93. HC 2:428.

94. See Lauritz G. Petersen, "The Kirtland Temple," *Brigham Young University Studies* 12 (Summer 1972): 405–9.

95. HC 2:427.

THE Church

A sense of what the restored Christian church would be like was closely related to the kind of power and authority thought necessary to found such a church. As Mormons built their temple in Kirtland to embody physically a developing sense of priesthood and hierarchy, with tiered pulpits for the holders of priesthood authority, they also articulated the way in which their developing priesthood structure recapitulated the organization which Jesus was thought to have established for his church. "Their avowed object is to restore christianity to its primeval purity," wrote Presbyterian minister Truman Coe of Kirtland, Ohio, in 1836. "After the example of our Savior they have recently ordained and commissioned twelve apostles and seventy elders, to go throughout this heathen country and to give a final call to repent and be baptised and believe in Mormonism before the wicked are cut off."¹

Four years later, in 1840, John Taylor, a Mormon apostle, published a pamphlet singing the virtues of the Mormon hierarchy and assailing Methodism for its unscriptural offices. Mormonism, Taylor asserted, was built up according to the New Testament order of church government: apostles, prophets, teachers, gifts of healing, and "diversities of tongues" (1 Cor. 12:28). "Methodism," according to Taylor, "has placed in the church, first, a president of conference; secondly, presidents of districts; thirdly, superintendant preachers; afterwards, itinerant and local preachers, class leaders, tract distributors, missionary collectors, &c., &c."²

When we look at the sectarians, Apostle Parley P. Pratt said in 1837, "instead of apostles and prophets, we . . . see false teachers."³ Pratt's brother Orson made a similar observation. "Instead of having apostles, prophets, and other inspired men in

the church now, receiving visions, dreams, revelations, ministrations of angels, and prophecies for the calling of officers, and for the government of the Church, they have a wicked, corrupt, uninspired pope, or uninspired archbishops, bishops, clergymen, etc., who have a great variety of corrupt forms of Godliness, but utterly deny the gift of revelation, and every other miraculous power which always characterized Christ's Church."⁴

Such Mormon claims to an inspired apostleship resonated for many Seekers. Although both Primitivists and Seekers believed in the "restoration of the ancient order of things," their conceptions of the restored church differed. Both followed the example of the cautious inquirers of the city of Berea, mentioned in Acts 17:10–12, who searched the Bible to test the message brought by Paul and Silas.⁵ But their biblical searches brought them to different conclusions, even though contemporary thinking about the nature of Jesus' church necessarily influenced both Seekers and Primitivists, as well as Mormons.

The Puritan notion of the visible and invisible church, for example, can be seen as the implicit conceptual framework for Seekers and other Primitivists looking forward to a church like the one Jesus established. Early Mormon notions about the nature of the Christian church can also be illuminated against the backdrop of this concept. The Puritan concept, derived from the teaching of fourth century theologian St. Augustine, involved the idea of two churches: one earthly, the other heavenly. The heavenly church was pure but invisible. It included everyone—living, dead, and those yet to be born—whom God had predestined for salvation. The earthly church was visible but not entirely pure; it included all living persons who professed to believe in Jesus, but of course not all such persons would necessarily be saved.⁶

The Puritan goal was to form congregations consisting of only God's elect, those who had predestined membership in the heavenly church. Consequently, the quest for a pure church led Puritans to adopt strict church discipline, including the Lesser Ban ("fencing the table," or permitting only those in good standing to take communion) and the Greater Ban (excommunication or expulsion). In addition, the Puritans in New England developed a test of faith which required anyone desiring membership in the Congregational church to receive instruction from the elders, to make a confession of faith, and to submit to an examination for "saving faith" before the elders and the congregation. If the candidate could show evidence of the work of grace in his life,

then he could become a member by covenant, a "visible saint."⁷ Thus, when an individual sinned or transgressed, he not only violated God's law but also broke the solemn covenant which he made with God before his church.

Puritans objected to the Anglican practice of open communion, believing it had brought God's displeasure upon them. The Apostle Paul's instructions to "let a man examine himself" before partaking of the emblems of Christ's blood and body (1 Cor. 11:28) was transferred to examination by church authorities. The Puritans of New England practiced closed communion until the Half Way Covenant of 1662.⁸ John Higginson was one Puritan who regretted the decreased piety. He wrote in 1663, "Our Fathers fled into this Wilderness from the face of a Lording Episcopacie, and humane injunctions in the Worship of God: now if any of us their children should . . . admit ignorant and Scandalous Persons to the Lord's Table, This would be a backsliding indeed."⁹ However, if the crime were vile enough or the sinner unrepentant, they could be excommunicated and banished from the colony. They were, as Jonathan Edwards said, "cast out" and "delivered up to Satan."¹⁰

Despite their exclusivity, Puritans of New England did not claim to be the only true church. They saw themselves as a church within a church, as a pure branch of the Anglican tree. Other Puritans—Separatists or Independents—believed it was necessary to withdraw completely from all forms of spiritual Babylon in order to escape the predicted plagues. For preaching this extreme separatist position, Roger Williams was banished from the Puritan colony: he forbade people, when they traveled to England, to "heare the word of God preached by godly Ministers in the Parish Churches."¹¹

Seekers believed in the total loss of the visible church during the apostasy, but they allowed for the continuing existence of an invisible church. Thus, despite the total apostasy, Williams believed God had from time to time called and inspired men to witness against spiritual Babylon.¹²

While awaiting the return of the visible church, literalistic Seekers lived so as to be members of the invisible one. "The Kingdom of God is within you," Williams declared,

and is the dominion of God in the conscience and spirit of the mind. . . . This kingdom of Christ is capable of subsisting and being managed inwardly in the minds of His people,

in hidden state concealed from the world. . . . Those that are in this Kingdom, and in whom the power of it is, are fitted to fly with the Church into the wilderness, and to continue in such a solitary, dispersed, desolate condition till God call them out of it. They have wells and springs opened to them in the wilderness, whence they draw the waters of salvation, without being in bondage to the life of sense.¹³

Spiritualistic Seekers, however, spiritualized even the visible church.¹⁴ Church membership, closed communion, and excommunication were not issues for them. Although they were sympathetic to the congregational concept of church government, which was democratic and self-contained in each parish, they believed that no churches could be properly organized until the restoration of the apostleship.¹⁵

Early Mormonism also seems to have distinguished between the visible and invisible church. In a revelation received probably some time in May 1829, God declared his intentions respecting the Book of Mormon and the restoration of the visible church.¹⁶ In the following passage from the revelation, the addition of "visible" and "invisible" in the appropriate places helps to illuminate what otherwise seems an obscure distinction:

I do not bring it [the Book of Mormon] to destroy that which they have received [the Bible], but to build it up. And for this cause have I said: If this generation harden not their hearts, I will establish my [visible] church among them. Now I do not say this to destroy my [invisible] church, but I say this to build up my [invisible] church. Therefore, whosoever belongeth to my [invisible] church need not fear, for such shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. But it is they who do not fear me, neither keep my commandments but build up churches unto themselves to get gain, yea, and all those that do wickedly and build up the kingdom of the devil—yea, verily, verily, I say unto you, that it is they that I will disturb, and cause to tremble and shake to the center (D&C 10:52–56).

This revelation came in response to questions raised about a previous revelation given in March 1829 in which God promised, "if the people of this generation harden not their hearts, . . . I will establish my church, like unto the church which was taught by my disciples in the days of old" (BofC 4:5). But, God also promised, "if this generation do harden their hearts against my word, . . . the sword of justice hangeth over their heads, and . . . the time cometh that it must fall upon them" (v. 6). Apparently, some of Smith's early followers were concerned about their fate

should the world reject the restoration of the church. Despite the corruption of the visible church, the revelation assures, those of the invisible church “need not fear, for such shall inherit the kingdom of heaven” (D&C 10:55). This theme is developed more clearly as section 10 elaborates on the Book of Mormon’s role in reestablishing the primitive gospel:

I will also bring to light my gospel which was ministered unto them [the Nephites], . . . that there may not be so much contention; yea, Satan doth stir up the hearts of the people to contention concerning the points of my doctrine; and in these things they do err, for they do wrest the scriptures and do not understand them. Therefore, I will unfold unto them this great mystery. . . . Behold this is my doctrine—whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my [invisible] church. Whosoever declareth more or less than this, the same is not of me, but is against me; therefore he is not of my church. And now, behold, whosoever is of my [invisible] church, and endureth of my church to the end, him will I establish upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them (D&C 10:62–64, 67–69).

Interpreting section 10 as referring to members of the invisible church resolves the difficulty associated with this passage, which was received about one year before the Church of Christ was organized but nevertheless speaks of the church in the present tense. Moreover, if the revelation did not refer to the invisible church, the emphatic statement that only a change of heart, or a spirit baptism, was necessary for membership, and that whoever taught “more or less than this” was “against” Jesus, directly contradicted the requirements given to the Nephites, which Smith translated from the plates about the same time (3 Ne. 11:32–41).

Those reading the Book of Mormon from a Seeker position could easily have interpreted the book as an endorsement of the idea that although the visible church was in the wilderness of apostasy, the invisible church, though few in number, remained. Describing the condition that would exist among the churches just prior to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, Nephi declares: “they have all gone astray save it be a few, who are the humble followers of Christ; nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men” (2 Ne. 28:14).

Nephi's vision of the rise and fall of the "great and abominable church" also seems to rely on the distinction between a visible and an invisible church (1 Ne. 13–14). Although the wicked church persecuted the saints, it never completely destroyed them; some saints were murdered while others were tortured and brought "down into captivity" (1 Ne. 13:5). The Puritans, on the other hand, were "the saints of God" (implied by comparing 13:9 and 13:13) who were led by "the Spirit of God . . . out of captivity" (13:13). In the American wilderness they enjoyed the "power of God" and the "Spirit of the Lord" (13:15–19, 30), though they stumbled in doctrine because of the altered condition of the Bible (13:29). However, even though they were members of the invisible church, American Gentiles would perish if they rejected the restoration of the visible church. "Thou has beheld that if the Gentiles repent it shall be well with them," the angel reminds Nephi. "Thou also knowest concerning the covenants of the Lord unto the house of Israel; and thou also hast heard that whoso repenteth not must perish. Therefore, wo be unto the Gentiles if it so be that they harden their hearts against the Lamb of God" (1 Ne. 14:5–6).

Subsequent revelations distinguished even more clearly the two churches. A vision, received on 16 February 1832, described the heavenly and earthly churches explicitly. Those who are saved are not only members of an earthly church, but, as the revelation explained, they are also members of "the church of the Firstborn . . . [and] have come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn" (D&C 76:54, 67). In March 1835, another revelation explained that those holding the Melchizedek Priesthood "have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn" (D&C 107:19; cf. Heb. 12:22–24).

Early Mormons, like Seekers and Puritans, were initially sympathetic towards the congregational notion of governance. But as pressures caused Smith to emphasize order and stability, Mormons increasingly responded to an episcopal ideal of church discipline. Anthropologist Rex Eugene Cooper has noted that the methods Smith followed to organize a church "had close affinity to Congregationalist concepts of church government." Cooper asserted that the organization of the church on 6 April 1830 was performed "according to commandment" of God and "consented

[to] by unanimous vote," and that "common consent" was "basic to the Mormon notion of Church government." Cooper found that "during the earliest years of the Church's existence there was considerable conflict over the issue of whether a man's authority within the Church resulted from the collective will of the people over whom he had jurisdiction or from the priesthood power and keys which he possessed and which were ultimately traceable to divine ordinations." As the idea of lineal descent of priesthood came to dominate Mormon thinking, "the Congregational-like procedure of sustaining ecclesiastical officers became essentially a formality."¹⁷

The Mormon church also came to require a test of "saving faith" similar to Puritan practice. "The Articles and Covenants" of the newly founded church instructed:

Whosoever humbleth himself before God and desireth to be baptized, and comes forth with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and witnesseth unto the church, that they have truly repented of all their sins and are willing to take upon them the name of Christ, having a determination to serve him unto the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, then shall they be received unto baptism into the church of Christ (BofC 24:30; cf. D&C 20:37).

The injunction to allow no one into church fellowship who had not "manifest[ed] by their works that they have received the spirit of Christ" placed a great deal of discretion in the hands of church leaders. For this reason, in July 1830 Oliver Cowdery and the Whitmer family objected to the above passage. According to Smith, Cowdery wrote in a letter, "I command you in the name of God to erase those words, that no priestcraft be amongst us!" However, Smith finally convinced them that "the sentence was reasonable, and according to Scripture."¹⁸

Both Mormons and Puritans recognized baptism as a covenant. Alma, for example, asked people, "What have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?" (Mos. 18:10). Baptism in Mormonism came to be regarded as entering into "a new and an everlasting covenant" (D&C 22:1).

Mormon communion also echoed Puritan patterns. The words of Mormon prayers over the bread and wine endorsed Puritan

covenant-church theology, in that those who partake “witness” before God to “keep his commandments” (D&C 20:77, 79; cf. Moro. 4:3, 5:2). The early Mormon church also advocated closed communion. Jesus institutes the sacrament among the Nephites with this instruction:

This is the commandment which I give unto you, that ye shall not suffer any one knowingly to partake of my flesh and blood unworthily, when ye shall minister it; for whoso eateth and drinketh my flesh and blood unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to his soul; therefore if ye know that a man is unworthy to eat and drink of my flesh and blood ye shall forbid him (3 Ne. 18:28–29).

When the Nephites later apostatize from the true gospel, Mormon writes that the churches “did receive all manner of wickedness, and did administer that which was sacred unto him to whom it had been forbidden because of unworthiness” (4 Ne. 1:27). Moroni speaks to his latter-day readers and advises them not to perform their religious duties unworthily. “See that ye are not baptized unworthily; see that ye partake not of the sacrament of Christ unworthily” (Morm. 9:29). J. J. Moss, a Campbellite who taught school in Kirtland, Ohio, described the early Mormon practice of closed communion. “They partook of the Lords supper at night with darkened windows & excluded from the room all but their own till they got through & then they opened the doors & called [in] the outsiders.”¹⁹

Excommunication was an important aspect of Mormon discipline as well. When Alma established a church in Zarahemla, he was troubled about what to do with “those who committed sin” (Mos. 26:6–12). As high priest of the church, Alma received a revelation which instructed him to excommunicate the unrepentant (26:13–32):

And it came to pass that Alma went and judged those that had been taken in iniquity, according to the word of the Lord. And whosoever repented of their sins and did confess them, them he did number among the people of the church; and those that would not confess their sins and repent of their iniquity, the same were not numbered among the people of the church, and their names were blotted out. And it came to pass that Alma did regulate all the affairs of the church (Mos. 26:34–37).

Moroni described the effort by the Nephite disciples to keep the church pure: “They were strict to observe that there should

be no iniquity among them; and whoso was found to commit iniquity, and three witnesses of the church did condemn them before the elders, and if they repented not, and confessed not, their names were blotted out, and they were not numbered among the people of Christ. But as oft as they repented and sought forgiveness, with real intent, they were forgiven" (Moro. 6:7-8).

The early Mormon church followed the Book of Mormon's teaching concerning excommunication. "Any member of the church of Christ transgressing, or being overtaken in a fault, shall be dealt with as the scriptures direct" (D&C 20:80). Those who were excommunicated were "delivered over to the buffetings of Satan until the day of redemption" (D&C 78:12; 82:21; 132:26; 43:11, 14).

Unlike Mormons and Puritans, some early Primitivists pushed for open communion in order to further the cause of Christian unity.²⁰ James O'Kelly urged the Baptists to "open a more charitable door, and receive to their communion those of Christian life and experience."²¹ Alexander Campbell's father, Thomas Campbell, withdrew from the orthodox (Associate) Presbyterians in Pennsylvania after being found guilty of violating the closed communion principle.²² Alexander Campbell wrote in the *Christian Baptist* in 1826 that he "was once so strict a separatist that I would neither pray nor sing praises with any one who was not as perfect as I supposed myself. In this most unpopular course I persisted until I discovered the mistake, and saw that on the principle embraced in my conduct there never could be a congregation or church upon the earth."²³ That same year Campbell also said, "I am inconsistent with my own principles when 'any evangelical sect or congregation' shall have welcomed me to their communion, and I have refused it."²⁴ However, many Disciples advocated closed communion despite Campbell's view, and the issue was never entirely resolved until the latter part of the nineteenth century.²⁵ Some in the primitive gospel movement also rejected tests of faith, public confessions, and theological examinations for church fellowship.²⁶ Mormonism emerged during the time that these issues were being debated, and while Primitivists generally were softening on these points, Mormonism sided with the conservatives in attempting to revive the concept of a pure church through the use of greater and lesser bans and firm hierarchical control.

Mormons, Primitivists, and Seekers did agree on the name of the church. The passage which inspired most Primitivists was

Acts 11:26, which says, "the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." Justifying his separation from the various churches, Roger Williams complained in 1644 that "their religion is so corrupt, as that there is not the very Name of Jesus Christ amongst them."²⁷ Abner Jones, who eventually withdrew from the Baptists, was troubled by the name of his church: "When I searched the New Testament through, to my great astonishment I could not find the denomination of baptist mentioned in the whole of it. . . . In the time of the apostles, the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch. After this search, I denied the name of baptist."²⁸ In 1801 Jones headed a group in Lyndon, Vermont, known "by the name of Christians only."²⁹

Other Primitivists also started groups which used the title of Christ—"Christian Connexion,"³⁰ "Christians,"³¹ or simply "Christian,"³² for example. When James O'Kelly left the Methodist church, he openly criticized sectarian names and expressed a desire for Christian unity: "Again as each Church is called by a different name, suppose we dissolve those unscriptural names and for peace's sake call ourselves Christians. . . . All may see what I am at, I wish the divine Savior to be the only head and governor of the Church, her law and her center of union."³³

In 1825, five years before organizing the Disciples of Christ, Alexander Campbell argued, "God makes it the duty of every Christian to oppose every sectarian name and creed."³⁴ Earlier that year he had said:

Look into the New Testament. There the church is the Church of Christ, and his disciples are Christians. Look out of the New Testament, and look into the creeds and confessions. Here we see a Baptist church, a Methodist church, and a Presbyterian church, &c. . . . The New Testament names, which all must approve of, are thrown aside to give place to sectarian names. . . . When we give a name and a creed to a church, other than the name of Christ, or Christian, and the New Testament, or the Gospel, that church acquires immediately in our imaginations and feelings, and in fact, a character altogether different from what the Church of Christ really possesses in the light of the New Testament.³⁵

Although the term "church of God" is used most frequently in the New Testament, Paul addresses the "churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16). Similarly the Book of Mormon uses the term "church of God" far more frequently than the term "church of Christ," but there is only one reference to the "church of God" in the

Book of Mormon after Jesus' birth and only one reference to the "church of Christ" before his birth (3 Ne. 26:21, 28:23; 4 Ne. 1:1, 26, 29; Moro. 6:4; Morm. 8:38). When Nephi uses the word "Christ" in the sixth century B.C., he quickly explains: "for in the last night the angel spake unto me that this should be his name" (2 Ne. 10:3). The importance of the title "Christ" is thus emphasized even in the Old Testament portion of the Book of Mormon. Nephi stresses the need to "take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism" (2 Ne. 31:13), and to "pray unto the Father in the name of Christ" (32:9). King Benjamin echoes a favorite primitive gospel passage when he proclaims: "There shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ" (Mos. 3:17/ Acts 4:10-12). God tells Alma, "blessed is this people who are willing to bear my name; for in my name shall they be called; and they are mine" (Mos. 26:18). General Moroni and his "band of Christians" are not unlike those in the New Testament who were "called Christians first in Antioch." Writes Moroni of this group a full century before the Antioch saints: "for thus were all the true believers of Christ, who belonged to the church of God, called by those who did not belong to the church" (Al. 46:13-14).

When the resurrected Jesus Christ visits the Nephites, he finds them arguing about the proper name of the church. His words echo Primitivist reasoning:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, why is it that the people should murmur and dispute because of this thing? Have they not read the scriptures, which say ye must take upon you the name of Christ, which is my name? For by this name shall ye be called at the last day; and whoso taketh upon him my name, and endureth to the end, the same shall be saved at the last day. Therefore, whatsoever ye shall do, ye shall do it in my name; therefore ye shall call the church in my name; and ye shall call upon the Father in my name that he will bless the church for my sake. And how be it my church save it be called in my name? For if a church be called in Moses' name then it be Moses' church; or if it be called in the name of a man then it be the church of a man; but if it be called in my name then it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon my gospel (3 Ne. 27:4-8).

In the church which Jesus established among the Nephites "none were received unto baptism save they took upon them the name

of Christ" (Moro. 6:3). Moroni criticizes the latter-day sectarian leaders when he asks, "Why have yet polluted the holy church of God? Why are ye ashamed to take upon you the name of Christ?" (Morm. 8:38).

Following such patterns, Joseph Smith called the church he organized on 6 April 1830 "The Church of Christ" (D&C 20:1). Nearly a year before, a revelation commanded: "take upon you the name of Christ. . . there is none other name given whereby man can be saved" (D&C 18:21, 23). However, by 1834 the name had been changed to "The Church of the Latter Day Saints."³⁶ After some debate over this name, Smith received a revelation on 26 April 1838 announcing that the new name should be: "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (D&C 115:4).

The Mormon form of church government developed within a framework congruent with that of most Seekers, with offices that functioned in the primitive church. In contrast Primitivists, such as Alexander Campbell, expected the restored church to follow the teachings of the early apostles and prophets but did not expect a return of the offices of apostle and prophet.

Richard Baxter, a seventeenth-century Presbyterian, believed that in the primitive church there were apostles, prophets, and evangelists—the "converting ministry"—who acted under the direct inspiration of God. These ministers, according to Baxter, were required to provide some "infallible Evidence to prove their own call, before the hearers could receive their Doctrine." Then there is the "feeding ministry." This second sort of minister "is not to receive from God any new Doctrine, Law, or Message; but to proclaim the Laws already delivered, and teach men the doctrine already revealed, and to Oversee and govern the Churches of Christ according to his Laws, and to go before the people in the worship of God."³⁷ Baxter then argued that only the first kind of minister need prove their calling by miracles and that the ministers of England need only preach the Bible. "Seekers," Baxter charged, "cheat men by jumbling all together, as if there were no Ministers of Gods [sic] appointment but those of the former sort."³⁸

Baxter apparently was unaware that John Jackson had used the distinction between the "breeding" and the "feeding" ministry to prove a Seeker point. In 1651, Jackson explained that the first type of minister consisted of apostles, prophets, and evangelists, the second of pastors and teachers. He then argued that it could be possible to have a true breeding ministry without a feeding ministry, but never the reverse.³⁹ Thus Jackson believed the

presence of charismatic leadership was indispensable to the continuance of a true church. Moreover, without apostles who could prove their call by miracles, Jackson wondered how the Church of England could justify its ministry. Indeed, nurturing ministers, who had not received their call from God through the breeding ministry, were intruders. Without new apostles and without miracles in the reformed churches, Jackson believed, the result was that "a powerless People give Call to a Giftless Ministry, (for, as they have not power, so they confer not any)." ⁴⁰

Seekers from the beginning had anticipated the restoration of the charismatic apostleship. Christopher Lawne, who broke with the Separatists and returned to the Church of England, wrote in 1612 that Seeker John Wilkinson and his disciples "will have Apostles."⁴¹ In 1623 Edmond Jessop, in his *Discovery of the Errors of the English Anabaptists*, described the expectations of Wilkinson and the Legatine-Arians:

Wilt thou have Apostles againe, to lay a new foundation, and must they ordaine new Elders before there can be a true constituted Church with her offices and ordinances, as thou termost them? Is this thy judgment? It may be. . . . It hath beene the opinion of some of thy predecessors, that held themselves as wise as thy self. . . . For instance, there were (among others) three Brethren, ancient Separatists from the Church of England, living sometimes in the Cittie of London, their names were Legat, these held it stifly that their [sic] must be new Apostles, before their [sic] could be a true constituted Church. . . . These Legats had a conceit, that their name did (as it were) foreshew and entitle them, to be the new Apostles, that must doe this new worke. . . . There was also one John Wilkinson, another ancient stout Separatist, who with divers that followed him, held the same likewise.

Jessop challenged those who were expecting the restoration of the apostleship. "Whence must they come? who shall send them? Christ is ascended, and he doth not now appeare to call, and send any, as he did the Apostle Paul; and Apostles must be such as come from the presence of the Lord; and have seene him; For which cause Saint Paul saith in the defense of his Apostleship, Have not I seene the Lord? [1 Cor, 9:1]. . . . If there can be no true Church, till there be new outward ordination, then there will never be a true Church."⁴²

Seekers in America were also looking for the restoration of the apostleship. There are many testimonies that Roger Williams

was waiting for "new apostles." John Cotton, for example, reported that Williams was looking for the restoration of the apostleship, and that he was waiting "till Christ shall send forth new Apostles to plant Churches anew."⁴³ Asa Wild did not use the term apostle, but he anticipated charismatic ministers with "higher authority, greater power, superior inspiration, and a greater degree of holiness, than was ever experienced before."⁴⁴ The leader of a Seeker-like group in Bowling Green, Kentucky, called "twelve men" as special witnesses.⁴⁵

It seems clear that the Seekers were not merely looking for founding apostles to inaugurate the restoration of the true church but rather for a perpetual apostleship. "There is a great dispute [in the church]," wrote Roger Williams in 1652, "whether the Ministry of the twelve (Matth. 10.) or of the 70 (Luk. 10.) [should] be continued since they both had an immediate call from Christ."⁴⁶ For Williams the apostasy had occurred with the loss of the apostleship.⁴⁷ Moreover, Williams argued that it was the exclusive function of the apostleship to make converts. Without such a "Begetting Ministry," according to Williams, churches could not be established.⁴⁸ He made this point in his *Bloudy Tenent*, stating that there is "no president [precedent] of any people in the Gospell converting & gathering themselves, without some Messenger sent from the Lord to effect those ends."⁴⁹ And in *Hireling Ministry*, Williams lamented hireling ministers who "pretend to the Apostles Commission, and to succeed them . . . [yet] have never pretended to the Gifts and Qualifications of such a Ministry. . . . [If] extradorinary gifts be ceased, how shall now the people of this Nation be supplied with Minsters[?]"⁵⁰

John Cotton objected to Williams's insistence on a converting ministry, asserting that "ordinary Ministers" could both convert and nourish. "To looke for another new Ministry (say of Apostles or Evangelists) to attend conversion of soules onely," Cotton charged, "is to looke for a blessing which the Lord hath not promised."⁵¹ Primitivist Alexander Campbell agreed that "as to the nature of the apostolical office be it observed . . . that it was essentially incommunicable. Holy writ recognizes but three orders of apostles, and none of them had lineal successors."⁵² Campbell undoubtedly rejected Mormon claims of apostleship on the same grounds,⁵³ for the early Mormon notion of church government evolved within a framework congruent with that articulated by Seekers.

The Book of Mormon describes both a converting and a feeding ministry. Alma was a charismatic leader with “power and authority from God” who ordained priests and teachers to “nourish” the church “with things pertaining to righteousness” (Mos. 18:18, 23:17–18). The nourishing ministry received their authority directly from the charismatic leader (23:17). A similar pattern was followed after the coming of Jesus. The twelve Nephite “disciples,” whom Jesus called in the New World, ordained priests and teachers (Moro. 3:1–4), and only these disciples could give the Holy Ghost to others (3 Ne. 18:36–38; Moro. 2:1–3). The disciples were the “converting” or “breeding” ministry, while priests and teachers were nourishers. Angels showed themselves unto those of “strong faith and a firm mind, . . . declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him. And by so doing, the Lord God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the Holy Ghost may have place in their hearts,” Moroni declared (Moro. 7:30–32).

Two types of ministers were evident in the early Mormon church, although names and responsibilities given to various offices fluctuated and evolved over time (D&C 20:38–60). With Seeker-like reasoning, Sidney Rigdon explained in 1835 the meaning of “the restoration of the ancient order of things.” This, he said, “has engrossed the attention of the religious public to some extent in modern times, and has given rise to many parties and sects in the so called christian world; each one in their turn supposing that they had the ancient order of things among them.” Rigdon argued that the Reformers had not followed the order of the church as set down in the New Testament. For in ancient times, the apostleship was set up first, “and out of this all the rest of the order grew.” Rigdon continued:

It was necessary that an order of things be established, beginning with apostles, and then to have prophets, and then evangelists, and after that pastors, teachers, &c. [1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11]. . . . No church need say to their fellow men, lo here is the ancient order of things, or lo it is there, unless they have the order before mentioned. . . . For no teacher can be found in the world, of whom God approves but one who has obtained his office by reason of an apostle, whom God first called, and through him others were called,—we do not mean a dead apostle but a living one; for whenever there ceases to be apostles on earth, then the order of God has

ceased, and the order of men, or devils, or of both has got its place.⁵⁴

Such a notion of leadership was more complex than a simple pastor-parishioner relationship. As sociologist Thomas O'Dea has noted:

The recognition of prophetic leadership implies the development of a hierarchical church structure, with authority flowing from top to bottom, at least as soon as the informal master-disciple relationship among a small group is replaced by the more formal relationship and membership in a large church organization. The process of binding charisma within organizational forms was one aspect of the evolution of such a hierarchical structure, and the original relationship between the prophet and his disciples evolved into a relationship between the prophet and an oligarchy of leading elders, which merged into and exercised ascendancy over the rank and file of the membership.⁵⁵

The initial governance of the Mormon church was similar to a presbyterial system, which is governed by elders who are all of equal rank.⁵⁶ Elders were the first governors or administrators in Joseph Smith's Church of Christ. In the beginning the office of elder was ambiguously intertwined with the office of apostle—as it had been in the New Testament portion of the Book of Mormon where the only elders mentioned are the twelve disciples (Moro. 3:1). The sole authority to give the Holy Ghost rested with them (3 Ne. 18:36–37; Moro. 2:1–3). They were the charismatic leaders who ordained priests and teachers “by the power of the Holy Ghost, which was in them” (Moro. 3:1–3). As the original twelve disciples died, others were ordained so that, apparently, a quorum of twelve disciples could be maintained (4 Ne. 1:14). Later, when the Nephites apostatized, Mormon records, “the Lord did take away his beloved disciples, and the work of miracles and of healing did cease because of the iniquity of the people. And there were no gifts from the Lord, and the Holy Ghost did not come upon any, because of their wickedness and unbelief” (Morm. 1:13–14). The twelve disciples were the converting ministry. They also had authority to baptize (3 Ne. 11:18–22, 12:1) and to administer the sacrament (Moro. 4:1–3). They otherwise led the church (3 Ne. 19:4–7; 4 Ne. 1:1).

In the “Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ,” the link between apostle and elder is clear:

An apostle is an elder, and it is his calling to baptize and to ordain other elders, priests, teachers and deacons, and to administer the flesh and blood of Christ, according to the scriptures; and to teach, expound, exhort, baptize, and watch over the church; and to confirm the church by the laying on of the hands, and the giving of the Holy Ghost, and to take the lead of all meetings. The elders are to conduct the meetings as they are led by the Holy Ghost (BofC 24:32–35/ D&C 20:38–45).

While it is true that an apostle was an elder, all elders were not necessarily apostles, although elders were also charismatic leaders. That the restored church would include twelve “disciples” was alluded to as early as June 1829 (D&C 18:27, 31, 37). Although the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was not formally organized until February 1835, evidence suggests that certain individuals had been denominated apostles prior to that time. Sanford Porter, who joined the church in Ohio in 1831, remembered that the Mormon missionaries “said they had a prophet and aposals [sic], as they had in antient [sic] Dayes, and they had the same gifts that the antients had.”⁵⁷ Indeed, a June 1829 revelation refers to the apostolic calling of Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer (D&C 18:9). Also the “Articles and Covenants” mentions the apostleship of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery (20:2–3; also 21:1, 10). Ezra Booth mentioned in 1831 that “Ziba [Peterson] was deprived of his Elder and Apostleship” and that Peterson had been “one of the twelve Apostles.”⁵⁸

At this time no distinct quorum of apostles existed within the ecclesiastical structure. Instead these apostles had received their callings charismatically rather than institutionally and acted somewhat independently. The June 1829 revelation explains how these early apostles were called. The Lord told Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer that they had authority like unto “Paul mine apostle, for you are called even with that same calling with which he was called” (D&C 18:9). Paul declared himself “an apostle, not of men neither by man, but by Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:1). The apostleship was institutionalized in 1835 when the three special Book of Mormon witnesses (Cowdery, Whitmer, and Martin Harris) formerly ordained the twelve. Referring to the angel who appeared to the three witnesses in June 1829, Cowdery told the twelve that they were being ordained to the apostleship by “those who have the power and authority from an angel” and that their ordinations would not be complete “till God has laid His hand

upon you." "It is necessary," Cowdery said, "that you receive a testimony from heaven for yourselves; so that you can bear testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon, and that you have seen the face of God."⁵⁹ These apostles were thus called institutionally before being confirmed charismatically. The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles organized in 1835 formed an administrative body similar to the traveling high council, another body of converting ministers (D&C 102:30, 107:23, 26). However, by the time of Smith's death in 1844, the twelve had become the dominant quorum in the Mormon hierarchy.

Paralleling this shift from charismatic to institutional apostleship was a deemphasis in the charismatic role of elders and the manner in which meetings were conducted. Again Mormons began with a notion roughly congruent with that of Seekers. Although Seekers had no formal church organization and observed none of the ordinances, they sometimes held meetings. Seeker meetings featured long periods of silence and impromptu sermons.⁶⁰ Seeker meetings were thus similar to those of the Quakers and Quietists but markedly different from the general practice among Primitivists. Alexander Campbell and other Primitivists usually read from prepared sermons, relying on authority from the Bible, but Seekers made a point of speaking as they were "lead by the Holy Spirit." Hence there was no set formula either for conducting meetings or for giving sermons. For example, Seeker Edward Burrough recorded they "met often together and waited upon the Lord in pure silence from our own words, all men's words, and harkened to the voice of the Lord."⁶¹ According to William Penn, the Seekers met together "not formally to Pray or Preach . . . but waited together in Silence, and as anything rose in any one of their Minds that they thought Savoured of a Divine Spring, they sometimes Spoke."⁶²

Similarly, the early "Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ" directed the elders to conduct the meetings "as they are led by the Holy Ghost" (BofC 24:35/ D&C 20:45). The following year this instruction was repeated (D&C 46:2). This harmonized with the practice of the Nephite church established by Jesus Christ. Moroni describes the meetings held by the Nephite Christians:

And the church did meet together oft, to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls. . . . And their meetings were conducted by the church

after the manner of the workings of the Spirit, and by the power of the Holy Ghost; for as the power of the Holy Ghost led them whether to preach, or to exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so it was done (Moro. 6:5, 9).

Counseling the missionaries who were to preach to “the congregations of the wicked,” the Lord said in an 1831 revelation that “they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost” (D&C 68:1–2). God also instructed the missionaries: “Neither take ye thought beforehand what ye shall say; but treasure up in your minds continually the words of life, and it shall be given you in the very hour that portion that shall be meted unto every man” (D&C 84:85; cf. Al. 17:2–3). Early Mormons were so insistent on speaking as moved upon by the spirit that many of them were offended when Joseph Smith read the dedicatory prayer at the Kirtland temple.⁶³

By 1835 the charismatic office of elder had been stabilized, and the “Articles and Covenants” changed to reflect the subordination of elders to church hierarchy. The early ambiguities between the offices of “elder” and “apostle” was clarified, and in the process the early leadership role of the elders was diminished. In clarifying the role of elder the Mormon movement removed ambiguities which had been inherited from the New Testament as well as the Book of Mormon. Elders are mentioned in the New Testament, but their role in the church is not clear. That elders exercised pastoral duties may be inferred from 1 Peter 5:1–4 and James 5:14. But there had been some debate about the distinction between elders and other ministers such as “prophets and teachers” of Acts 13:1–3 and “bishops” of Titus 1:5–7. That apostles were elders is implied from 1 Peter 5:1, 2 John 1:1 and 3 John 1:1. Clearly elders who were apostles were missionaries, but other elders seem to have been stationary leaders of local churches.⁶⁴

Other offices within the priesthood were similarly evolving within an institutional framework. In the Old Testament portion of the Book of Mormon, both priests and teachers ministered in local churches: teachers governing and priests preaching (Mos. 25:19–29). The teachers seem to have been subordinate to the priests, who in turn were subordinate to a presiding high priest over the whole church (26:7). Both priests and teachers apparently had authority to baptize (Al. 15:13). In the New Testament portion of the Book of Mormon, the authority of priests and teachers is subordinate to that of elders. Priests were distinguished

from teachers in that they shared with elders the right of administering the sacrament (Moro. 4:1). Little is said about the duty of priests and teachers.

In a revelation dictated in June 1829, one of the specific duties of the future twelve was to "ordain priests and teachers" (D&C 18:32). This instruction seemed to follow the pattern of the Nephite church (Moro. 3:1-4). However, instructions given the following year not only allowed elders to ordain priests and teachers (D&C 20:39) but also authorized priests to "ordain other priests, teachers, and deacons" (20:48). Once the church had been restored and priests and teachers had been ordained by the charismatic leaders, those leaders presumably could delegate ecclesiastical responsibilities. But elders retained their charismatic function by reserving to themselves the authority to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The duties and powers of the priests, in addition to administering the sacrament (D&C 20:76), were outlined in June 1830 as follows:

The priest's duty is to preach, teach, expound, exhort and baptize, and administer the sacrament, and visit the house of each member, and exhort them to pray vocally and in secret, and also to attend to all family duties; and ordain other priests, teachers and deacons, and take the lead of meetings; but none of these offices is he to do when there is an elder present, but in all cases is to assist the elder (BofC 24:36-37/ D&C 20:46-52).

Nowhere in the New Testament is the term "priest" used as an office in the Christian ministry. The first to use the titles of "priest" and "high priest" in connection with the Christian ministry were the third-century theologians Tertullian and Hippolytus.⁶⁵

The duties and powers of teachers were also outlined in June 1830:

The teacher's duty is to watch over the church always, and be with them, and strengthen them, and see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying nor backbiting, nor evil speaking; and see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty; and he is to take the lead of meetings in the absence [sic] of the elder or priest, and is to be assisted always, and in all his duties in the church by the deacons;

but neither the teachers nor deacons have authority to baptize nor administer the sacrament, but are to warn, expound, exhort and teach, and invite all to come unto Christ (BofC 24:38–41/ D&C 20:53–59).

The early New Testament church had, at least in some areas, presiding teachers (Acts 13:1; Eph. 4:11). The exact role of the teacher in the early Christian church is unclear, but if the Jewish teachers of the synagogue provided a pattern, their primary duty would have been as exhorters and theological instructors to the church.⁶⁶

In the early Mormon church, before the present age-rank system was established, teachers exercised more authority than they now do. In September 1832, elders and priests were instructed to travel, and “deacons and teachers should be appointed to watch over the church, to be standing ministers unto the church” (D&C 84:111). Later, when a system of bishops took over the responsibility of presiding over local churches, the teacher’s office declined.

The office of deacon did not apparently exist in the earliest days of the organization.⁶⁷ What is apparently an early draft of D&C 20, given to Oliver Cowdery in 1829 with the heading “A commandment from god unto Oliver how he should build up his church & the manner thereof,” mentions the offices of elders, priests, and teachers but not that of deacon.⁶⁸ In a revelation received in June 1829, the apostleship is said to include the authority to “ordain priests and teachers” (D&C 18:32). In a revelation given as late as January 1831, deacons are again conspicuously missing from the Lord’s commandment to “every man, both elder, priest, teacher, and also member” (D&C 38:40).

Indication that the office of deacon may have been added to the “Articles and Covenants” after its original composition is the manner in which the material dealing with the office is introduced into the document. Specific sections in the “Articles and Covenants” address the duties of the other offices. But deacons are discussed only parenthetically in connection with teachers, whom they are to assist (D&C 20:53–60; also 84:111).

The office of deacon is mentioned in the New Testament (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8–13). Unlike Mormon deacons, early Christian deacons held positions of great respect and responsibility in the church. The duty of distributing the sacrament to the church became the responsibility of Mormon deacons, although this duty is not mentioned in the “Articles and Covenants.” This possibly

reflects the early Christian tradition which survived in Catholicism.⁶⁹

The office of bishop is not mentioned in the Book of Mormon, and the Church of Christ as constituted on 6 April 1830 did not include this office.⁷⁰ The addition of bishops coincides with the growing deemphasis on charisma and the corresponding emphasis on hierarchy and lineal priesthood. Edward Partridge was the first bishop of the Mormon church. On 4 February 1831 Partridge was called by revelation to be "ordained a bishop unto the church, to leave his merchandise and to spend all his time in the labors of the church" (D&C 41:9-11). The following December Newel K. Whitney was appointed bishop over the church in Ohio; Partridge was assigned to preside over the church in Missouri (D&C 72). Bishops were to administer to the "temporal" or physical and economic welfare of the Saints. More explicit instructions on the office of bishop came in 1835 (D&C 72:9-23; 107:15-17, 68-76, 88). When the church established its headquarters in Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1839, still more bishops were ordained, this time as leaders of "wards." During this period, the office of elder lost its status.⁷¹ The ordination of high priests had begun in June 1831, and new bishops were thereafter taken from this hierarchical body (D&C 68:14-15, 19; 72:1-2; 107:69).

The office of bishop or "overseer" was important in the primitive church—much care was taken in the appointment of men to this office (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:6-9). Still the relation of New Testament bishops to other offices is unclear. Bishops may have been presiding elders.⁷² They were not high priests. The office of high priest under the old covenant was restricted to one individual and was not carried over into the New Testament church.

In the Old Testament portion of the Book of Mormon, a high priest presided over the church (Mos. 23:16, 26:7, 29:42; Al. 4:4, 18), although at one point there were at least three high priests (Al. 45:20-23; 46:6; 49:30; Hel. 3:25). When Jesus appeared, he appointed twelve disciples to lead the church. The twelve were elders, who ordained priests and teachers; high priests did not exist in the church Jesus established among the Nephites.

Joseph Smith ordained several of the leading brethren to the "high priesthood" on 3 June 1831. In the minutes of a meeting held on 4 August 1831, both elders and those previously ordained to the high priesthood are listed together under "Elders Present," and this is the case for meetings held between 24 August

and 21 October 1831. But at a church conference held on 25 October 1831, the minutes list elders separately from the “Names of those ordained to the Highpriesthood [sic].” The high priesthood is referred to as an “office” in the minutes of meetings held on 1 and 8 November 1831, but both high priests and elders are listed under the heading “Elders Present.” On 28 January 1832, the minutes of the meeting list the “Names of Elders Present who were ordained to the H[igh]. P[riest]. H[ood].” and the “Names of Elders who were not ordained to the H[igh]. P[riest]. H[ood].” Thus there may have been a question of whether those ordained held a new office of high priest or were simply elders with additional authority. By 26 April 1832, when Smith was sustained in Missouri as president of the high priesthood, the minutes of the meeting list “High Priests” and “Elders” separately.⁷³

At a conference held on 25 October 1831, Smith explained that “the order of the Highpriesthood [sic] is that they have power given them to seal up the Saints unto eternal life.”⁷⁴ A revelation given in November 1831 told the high priests that “as many as the Father shall bear record, to you shall be given power to seal them up unto eternal life” (D&C 68:12). Zebedee Coltrin recorded in his missionary diary that on 15 November 1831 he and others visited the “Shalersville” branch and that “Br David seeled them up unto Eternal life.”⁷⁵ However, the charismatic role of high priests was declining as revelations came outlining their administrative duties and powers. Not until a passage was added to the 1831 revelation prior to its publication in the Doctrine and Covenants in 1835 would it be explained that a high priest “has authority to officiate in all the lesser offices” of the priesthood, including that of bishop (D&C 68:19).⁷⁶ In March 1835 Smith outlined the duties of the various priesthood offices. High priests, he explained, “have a right to officiate in their own standing, under the direction of the presidency, in administering spiritual things . . . agreeable to the covenants and commandments of the church; and they have a right to officiate in all these offices of the church when there are no higher authorities present” (D&C 107:10, 12). Also prior to publication in 1835 material concerning the duties of high priests was added to the “Articles and Covenants” (D&C 20:66–67; cf. BofC 24).

In November 1831 a new revelation counseled that each of the priesthood offices, including that of high priests, was to have presidents (D&C 107:59–69).⁷⁷ On 25 January 1832 at a conference of the church, Smith was ordained president of the high

priesthood. Orson Pratt recorded that "the Prophet was acknowledged President of the High Priesthood, and hands were laid on him by Elder Sidney Rigdon, who sealed upon his head the blessings which he had formerly received."⁷⁸ On 8 March, Rigdon and Jesse Gause, a little-known figure in Mormon history because he apostatized shortly after his appointment, were chosen as Smith's counselors in the presidency.⁷⁹ Gause was replaced by Frederick G. Williams on 18 March 1833.⁸⁰ By March 1835 this quorum of three presidents had become the "Presidency of the Church" (D&C 107:22, 91–92).

On 28 February 1835, Smith began choosing men to fill the First Quorum of Seventy, stating that "the Seventies are to constitute traveling quorums, to go into all the earth, whithersoever the Twelve Apostles shall call them."⁸¹ This first quorum represented a new addition to the hierarchy of church administration. In March 1835, the role of the first quorum was explained:

The Seventy are also called to preach the gospel, and to be especial witnesses unto the Gentiles and in all the world—thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling. And they form a quorum, equal in authority to that of the Twelve special witnesses or Apostles. . . . The Seventy are to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Twelve or the traveling high council, in building up the church and regulating all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and then to the Jews (D&C 107:25–26, 34).⁸²

The office of seventy is not mentioned in the Book of Mormon, but both Moses and Jesus appointed seventy men to ecclesiastical duties (Ex. 24:1, 9–11; Lk. 10:1–24). However, Protestants have not generally considered that these seventy constituted an office in the church. Roger Williams wondered if the "Ministry of . . . the 70 (Luk. 10.) [should] be continued."⁸³ George Fox recorded in his journal that after Quaker churches had been established in the north, the Lord raised up seventy missionaries, as in Luke's Gospel, and sent them two by two into the southern counties in the summer of 1654.⁸⁴

The process of elaborating the function of various priesthood offices within the Mormon church thus played itself out within a framework consistent with Seeker expectations about restored apostolic authority and a feeding ministry deriving its authority from the restored apostleship. The governing practices of the Mormon church had at first been more or less presbyterial.

When Smith's charismatic leadership was challenged, a more hierarchical or episcopal form of church government was developed which relied less on scriptural precedent for offices and procedures and systematically diminished the role of charisma. In addition, unlike Alexander Campbell's democratically organized Disciples of Christ, Mormonism was becoming less democratic.⁸⁵ This transformation discouraged challenges to institutional authority because an individual's authority could now only be understood within the context of a new elaborate structuring of power.

— NOTES —

1. *The Ohio Observer*, 11 Aug. 1836, in Milton V. Backman, Jr., "Truman Coe's 1836 Description of Mormonism," *Brigham Young University Studies* 17 (Spring 1977): 354.

2. John Taylor, *Truth Defended and Methodism Weighed in the Balance and Found Wanting* (Liverpool: J. Tomkins, [1840]), 11.

3. Parley P. Pratt, *A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People* (New York, 1837), 119.

4. Orson Pratt, *A Series of Pamphlets on the Doctrines of the Gospel* (Chattanooga, TN, 1899), 227.

5. John Jackson, *A Sober Word to a Serious People* (London, 1651), 60; Roger Williams, *The Hireling Ministry None of Christs* (London, 1652), unpaginated introduction [1]; [Roger Williams], *The Examiner Defended* (London, 1652), "To the Reader."

6. For the Puritan concept of church, see Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963).

7. For a description of the development in New England of the test of faith in connection with church membership, see *ibid.*, 64–112.

8. *Ibid.*, 64–138.

9. John Higginson, *The Cause of God and His People in New England* (Cambridge, MA, 1663), 14.

10. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of President Edwards*, 10 vols. (London, 1817; rep. New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), 6:513–22.

11. John Cotton, *The Bloudy Tenent, Washed . . . Whereunto is added a Reply to Mr. Williams Answer, to Mr. Cottons Letter* (London, 1647), 40; see also 54.

12. Williams, *Hireling Ministry*, 2.

13. Williams, *An Epistle to the Mystical Body of Christ on Earth: The Church Universal in Babylon* (London, 1662).

14. Thomas Collier, *The Marrow of Christianity* (London, 1647), 63; William Dell, *The Way of True Peace and Unity* (London, 1649), 19.

15. George Arthur Johnson has described spiritualistic Seekerism as Congregational. See "From Seeker to Finder: A Study in Seventeenth-Century English Spiritualism Before the Quakers," *Church History* 17 (1948): 313.

16. Because the revelation is dated May 1829 in both the Book of Commandments and the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants but placed in an 1828 setting in the manuscript history of the church, there has been some confusion on the dating. While various theories have been advanced, I prefer to follow the May 1829 date for at least the last part of section 10 (possibly verses 48–70). It is difficult to imagine the last part of this section was received before Book of Commandments 4:5, which promised that God would establish a church if people did not harden their hearts, a promise I think is reflected in section 10:53. For a discussion of this problem, see Stanley R. Larson, "A Study of Some Textual Variations in the Book of Mormon Comparing the Original and the Printer's Manuscripts, and the 1830, the 1837, and the 1840 Editions," M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1974, 17–18; Stephen Snow in *Mormon History Association Newsletter* 44 (June 1980): 15; Max Parkin in *Mormon History Association Newsletter* 45 (Nov. 1980): 2–4; and Max Parkin, "A Preliminary Analysis of the Dating of Section 10," in *Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1979), 68–84.

17. Rex Eugene Cooper, "The Promises Made to the Fathers: A Diachronic Analysis of Mormon Covenant Organization with Reference to Puritan Federal Theology," 2 vols., Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1985, 1:121–22.

18. Joseph Smith, Jr., et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1964), 1:104; hereafter HC.

19. J. J. Moss to J. T. Cobb, 17 Dec. 1878, in A. T. S. Schroeder Collection, Wisconsin State Historical Society.

20. I. Daniel Rupp, comp., *He Pasa Ekklesia: An Original History of the Religious Denominations at Present in the United States* (Philadelphia: J. Y. Humphreys, 1844), 259.

21. Wilbur E. MacClenny, *The Early History of the Christian Church in the South* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1910), 248–49.

22. Winfred Ernest Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ* (St. Louis: Christian Board of Education, 1948), 135–36.

23. *Christian Baptist* 3 (1826): 373, in Robert Robinson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 2 vols. (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1897–98), 2:137.

24. *Christian Baptist* 3 (1826): 238, in Royal Humbert, ed., *A Compend of Alexander Campbell's Theology* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1961), 189.

25. See Garrison and DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ*, 348–50.

26. Nathan O. Hatch, "The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People," *Journal of American History* 67 (Dec. 1980): 556.

27. [Roger Williams], *The Bloudy Tenent* ([London], 1644), 138.

28. *Memoir of Elder Abner Jones by His Son. A.D. Jones* (Boston, 1842), 27–28.

29. *Ibid.*, 34–36, 48.

30. *Ibid.*, 64. See also *The Life, Conversion, Preaching, Travels and Sufferings of Elias Smith* (Portsmouth, 1816), 58.

31. William Garrett West, *Barton W. Stone: Early American Advocate of Christian Unity* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1954), 61, 75.

32. Wilbur E. MacClenny, *The Early History of the Christian Church in the South* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1910), 117.
33. *Ibid.*, 248–49.
34. *Christian Baptist* 3 (1 Aug. 1825): 9–10.
35. *Ibid.*, 2 (4 July 1825): 237.
36. David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, MO, 1887), 73; see also HC 2:63.
37. Richard Baxter, *A Second Sheet for the Ministry, Justifying our Calling Against Quakers, Seekers, and Papists, and all that deny us to be the Ministers of Christ* (London, 1657), 2.
38. *Ibid.*, A2.
39. John Jackson, *A Sober Word to a Serious People* (London, 1651), 10–11.
40. *Ibid.*, 15, 18.
41. Christopher Lawne, *The Prophane Schisme of the Brownists or Separatists* ([London], 1612), 55.
42. Edmond Jessop, *A Discovery of the Errors of the English Anabaptists* (London, 1623), 76–78; see also 88–89.
43. Cotton, *Bloudy Tenent, Washed*, 2, 9, 45, 124–27; Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana: or, The Ecclesiastical History of New-England* (London, 1702), Bk. 7, 9; Jonathan Winthrop, *Winthrop's Journal "History of New England," 1630–1649*, ed. James Kendall Hosmer, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), 1:309, 2:39.
44. *Wayne Sentinel*, 22 Oct. 1823.
45. *Ibid.*, 8 Oct. 1823.
46. Williams, *Hireling Ministry*, 20.
47. Winthrop, *Winthrop's Journal*, 2:39; Williams, *Hireling Ministry*, 17.
48. Cotton, *Bloudy Tenent, Washed*, 125–27; [Williams], *Bloudy Tenent*, 28, 165–67, 236; Williams, *Hireling Ministry*, 4, 9; Roger Williams, *Mr. Cotton's Letter Lately Printed, Examined and Answered* (London, 1644), 42.
49. [Williams], *Bloudy Tenent*, 166; see also R[oger] Williams, *The Bloudy Tenent Yet More Bloudy* (London, 1652), 2; Williams, *Hireling Ministry*, 3–4, 9, 17, 20.
50. Williams, *Hireling Ministry*, 4, 6, 16–17.
51. Cotton, *Bloudy Tenent, Washed*, 124–27.
52. Humbert, *Compend of Alexander Campbell's Theology*, 155.
53. See Alexander Campbell, "The Mormonites," *Millennial Harbinger*, Feb. 1831, 93.
54. [Sidney] R[igdon], "The Ancient Order of Things," *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (Sept. 1835): 182–85.
55. Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 160.
56. Whitmer, *Address to All Believers in Christ*, 32–34. D. Michael Quinn has written: "From the 1820s to the 1830s, Mormonism moved from being a collection of individuals whose equally valid personal revelations revolved around Joseph Smith's theophany to being a church membership with vaguely defined obligations to Joseph Smith as president and to his evolving hierarchy. . . . An immediate problem in the new Church was that

individuals who had supernatural, revelatory experiences of their own could not see that these were in any way inferior to the theophanies and revelations of Joseph Smith. This view posed no threat to pre-1830 Mormonism, but it invited disaster to the newly restored Church of Christ in which Joseph Smith was designated by revelation on 6 April 1830 as 'a [not 'the'] seer, a translator, [and] a prophet' (D&C 21:1; italics added). Joseph Smith responded to the problem by dictating a revelation in February 1831 in which the Lord stated that only Joseph Smith and his successors could give commandments and revelations to the Church (D&C 43)." See "From Sacred Grove to Sacral Power Structure," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 17 (Summer 1984): 12-13.

57. J. Grant Stevenson, ed., *Porter Family History* (Delta, UT: J. Grant Stevenson, 1957), 1:5-91, in Davis Bitton, *Guide to Mormon Diaries and Autobiographies* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1977), 278. For the date of Sanford's baptism, see Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1971), 4:622.

58. E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled [sic]: or, A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, From Its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, OH: E. D. Howe, 1834), 208. Concerning Ziba Peterson's fall, see D&C 58:60.

59. HC 2:195-96.

60. See James Hastings, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 13 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908-21), 11:350; M. J. Havran, "Seekers," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 17 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967), 13:47.

61. George Fox, *Great Mystery of the Great Whore* (1658), see "Preface" by Edward Burrough.

62. W[illiam] Penn, *A Brief Account of the Rise and Progress Of the People called Quakers* (London, 1695), 22; see also William Penn's Preface to Fox's *Journal* (Philadelphia, 1831), 1:xxv.

63. See Brigham Young et al., *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855-86), 11:9. When the "Articles and Covenants" was edited by Joseph Smith in 1835, a curb was put on the blanket statement that the elders were "to conduct the meetings as they are led by the Holy Ghost" (BoFC 24:35). Four years earlier, at a conference of the church held in Hiram, Ohio, Smith complained that "the ancient manner of conducting meetings as they were led by the Holy Ghost . . . was not perfectly known by many of the Elders" (Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1844* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983], 17). The passage was altered to read that the elders are to conduct their meetings "as they are led by the Holy Ghost, according to the commandments and revelations of God" (D&C 20:45).

64. George Arthur Buttrick, et al., eds., *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 2:73-75.

65. *Ibid.*, 3:889-91.

66. *Ibid.*, 4:522-23.

67. One interpretation of the available evidence indicates that the office of deacon was added sometime between 6 April 1830, when the Church of Christ was formally organized, and 25 October 1831, when they were

listed for the first time in the "Far West Record" as present at a church conference in Orange, Cuyahoga County, Ohio. The earliest printing of the "Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ" (D&C 20) appeared in the *Painesville Telegraph* on 19 April 1831. The mention of "deacons" is probably the result of later redaction. See Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 19. See also Whitmer, *Address*, 32, 50.

68. Robert J. Woodford, "The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants," 2 vols., Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1974, 1:287-90.

69. *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 1:785-86.

70. Reference to the office of bishop was added to the "Articles and Covenants" prior to its reprinting in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants (cf. D&C 20:66-67).

71. See D. Michael Quinn, "The Evolution of the Presiding Quorums of the LDS Church," *Journal of Mormon History* 1 (1974): 21-38; and Dale Beecher, "The Office of Bishop," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15 (Winter 1982): 103-15.

72. *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 1:441-43.

73. See Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 6-7, 9, 11-18, 19, 26-29, 43-44.

74. *Ibid.*, 20-21.

75. Zebedee Coltrin Diary, 15 Nov. 1831, in David John Buerger, "The Fulness of the Priesthood: The Second Anointing in Latter-day Saint Theology and Practice," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 16 (Spring 1983): 14.

76. On the dating of D&C 68:16-21, see Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith: A Historical and Biographical Commentary of the Doctrine and Covenants* (Provo, UT: Seventy's Mission Bookstore, 1981), 145n1.

77. On the dating of D&C 107:59-100, see Kirtland Revelations Book, 84-86; and Cook, *Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 215-16, 326n1.

78. Eldon J. Watson, comp. and ed., *The Orson Pratt Journals* (Salt Lake City: Eldon J. Watson, 1975), 11.

79. In the Kirtland Revelations Book, Smith recorded: "March 8th 1832. Chose this day and ordained brother Jesse Gause and Broth[er] Sidney [Rigdon] to be my counsellors of the ministry of the presidency of th[e] high Priesthood" (10-11). On Jesse Gause, see Robert J. Woodford, "Jesse Gause, Counselor to the Prophet," *Brigham Young University Studies* 15 (Spring 1975): 362-64; H. Michael Marquardt, "The Strange Beginnings of the Mormon High Priesthood Presidency," *Journal of Pastoral Practice* 4 (1980): 86-91; D. Michael Quinn, "Jesse Gause: Joseph Smith's Little-Known Counselor," *Brigham Young University Studies* 23 (Fall 1983): 487-93.

80. On the 18 March 1833 appointment of Frederick G. Williams, see Kirtland Council Book, 17. Early manuscripts indicate that a March 1832 revelation (now D&C 81) was originally intended for Jesse Gause, but when it was published in the Doctrine and Covenants in 1835 the name was changed to Frederick G. Williams. See Cook, *Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 171.

81. HC 2:202. For a general history of the office of seventy, consult Quinn, "Presiding Quorums," 31-32; James Norman Baumgarten, "The Role

and Function of the Seventies in L.D.S. Church History," M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1960; and Richard D. Ouellette, "Seventies Quorums: 1835-1986," *Sunstone* 11 (Jan. 1987): 35-37.

82. The vision authorizing the calling of the Seventy is apparently not extant in written form. See Quinn, "Presiding Quorums," 31. Although the revelation said the Seventy formed "a quorum equal in authority to that of the Twelve" (D&C 107:26), in April 1837 Smith made it clear that the Seventy were subordinate to the Twelve. See *Messenger and Advocate* 3 (April 1837): 486-87; cf. D&C 107:34.

83. Williams, *Hireling Ministry*, 20.

84. George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox*, ed. John L. Nickalls (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), 174.

85. "Each congregation [of the Disciples of Christ] is independent of every other, managing its own affairs, and electing its own officers" (Rupp, *He Pasa Ekklesia*, 259). For the primitive gospel movement's appeal to the democratic impulse of those in the new republic, see Hatch, "The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People," 545-46.

THE Fulness of the Gospel

The founding document of the Mormon church, its "Articles and Covenants," declared that the Book of Mormon contained "the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and to the Jews also" (D&C 20:8-9). This fulness, according to the Book of Mormon, consisted of faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost (3 Ne. 11:28-41). But Mormonism's restoration of charismatic apostolic leadership predisposed the movement towards theological development. The Bible was not necessarily the last word on theological issues. Thus Mormons shared the expectation of an open canon of scripture with Seekers.

Primitivists advocated a closed canon of scripture. Apostasy for them had occurred because Christians had not followed the Bible. In contrast, Seekers not only had doubts about the condition of the Bible, but their emphasis on charisma caused them to limit the role of scripture. Apostasy, in their view, had occurred in the absence of charismatic authority. The sought-for restoration of the apostleship would insure the restoration of inspired, authoritative utterances that would be as binding as those given by ancient apostles. Hence, for Seekers, the canon of scripture was open.

Spiritualistic Seekers believed the Bible was a record of the workings of the Spirit and was not to be taken literally.¹ Quakers continued in this tradition by placing spiritual experience above the Bible.² Literalistic Seekers believed in the literal fulfillment of Bible prophecy, but they emphasized that the restoration would bring a greater knowledge of the things of God than ever before. Both types of Seekers were accused of being "anti-scriptural" by contemporaries.

Asa Wild concluded that "if we cannot in these days, as well as anciently, enjoy the unerring guidance and teaching of the divine

Spirit, then the very essence of religion is lost, or essentially changed; and christians are unavoidably left to wander in the dreary maze of unsatisfied anxiety, and precarious conjecture; not only as to the particular duties to be performed, and truths to be believed; but whether they be christians or not; and consequently, whether they are travelling to heaven or to hell." The true followers of Jesus Christ, according to Wild, advocate "the glorious doctrine of infallible inspiration, or direct communication with God; by which we understand and know the will and truths of God."³ Wild himself enjoyed "infallible inspiration" and received a revelation in 1823 about the end of the world, which, according to the title page of his book, was "written and published, by the express and immediate command of God."

Seeker Erastus Hanchett also proclaimed a gospel of immediate revelation. "It is upwards of eight years," he recalled in 1825, "since I have been called into the school of Christ, under the immediate instructions of his blessed Spirit, without any dependence or instructions from man." Hanchett believed God "is only known, and that his revelation is only known by immediate revelation."⁴ His epistle, published in the *Wayne Sentinel* on 23 February 1825, ended with the statement that it had been "given forth by the immediate revelation of the Spirit of God, through his Servant, ERASTUS HANCHETT. Salem [Massachusetts], the 11th of the 1st mo[nth] 1825; written between the hours of 2 and 5, this morning."

Similarly, the Book of Mormon warned those in the last days who denied continuing revelation. Nephi writes:

Wo be unto him that hearkeneth unto the precepts of men, and denieth the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost! . . . Wo be unto him that shall say: We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough! For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have. Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto the precepts of men, save their precepts shall be given by the power of the Holy Ghost (2 Ne. 28:26, 29–31).

The Book of Mormon explicitly addresses those who believe the canon of scripture is closed. Nephi writes, "Because my words shall hiss forth—many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible" (2 Ne. 29:3). "Because that I have spoken one word," God states, "ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another; for my work is not yet finished; neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and forever. Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written" (vv. 9–10).

That the restored Church of Christ would proceed on grounds of continuing revelation was established at the outset. When the church was organized on 6 April 1830, Smith dictated a revelation which commanded the church to "give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, . . . for his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith" (D&C 21:4–5). Another revelation declared that the Lord had "given him the keys of the mysteries, and the revelations which are sealed" (28:7). The element of continuing revelation insured a gradual unfolding and canonization of various doctrines.

Although Seekers and Primitivists disagreed on the source of authority necessary to perform baptism, both believed in the total immersion of adult believers, as did Mormons. The Seekers of sixteenth-century Europe and England had begun to raise questions about traditional forms of baptism. Although they believed they lacked the authority to perform the ordinance, Seekers asserted that baptism should be performed "in the name of Christ" or "of the Lord Jesus."⁵ Roger Williams, although he was rebaptized by the Anabaptists by "dipping," confessed in 1649 that he had confidence "neither in the authority by which it is done, nor in the manner."⁶ Williams was apparently evolving towards the doctrine of baptism by immersion.

Most Primitivists were immersionists. Alexander Campbell, for example, said in 1820 that "immersion in water is a beautiful and striking representation of our faith in the death and burial of Christ; and our emerging out of it, a suitable emblem of his resurrection from the grave, and of our obligations to a new life so that the sprinkling of a few drops of water has no analogy to the things signified in Baptism."⁷ Those who left Campbell's movement for Seekerism probably retained their immersionist ideas.

The Book of Mormon also subscribes to this mode of baptism. When Alma baptized Helam, they both “stood forth in the water” and, having said the baptismal prayer, “both Alma and Helam were buried in the water” (Mos. 18:12, 14). So that “there shall be no disputations,” Jesus gave explicit instructions concerning the proper mode of baptism: “Ye shall go down and stand in the water, and in my name shall ye baptize them . . . And then shall ye immerse them in the water, and come forth again out of the water” (3 Ne. 11:23, 26).

Seekers and Primitivists differed somewhat in how they conceived the function of baptism. Both Walter Scott and Alexander Campbell began teaching that water baptism was for “the remission of sins.” “To call the receiving of any spirit or any influence, or energy, or any operation upon the heart of man, regeneration,” argued Campbell, “is an abuse of all speech, as well as a departure from the diction of the Holy Spirit, who calls nothing personal regeneration except the act of immersion.”⁸ This distinctive doctrine of baptismal regeneration was rejected by Seekers and most others. Seekers were charismatic and emphasized the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Early Mormons also rejected Campbell’s notion of “baptismal regeneration.” In the Book of Mormon baptism is part of the process of repentance—thus the expression “baptism unto repentance” (Al. 5:62; Moro. 8:11, etc.). Baptism is never for the actual remission of sins, as Scott and Campbell taught. Rather, regeneration takes place through the reception of the Holy Ghost. Nephi teaches: “The gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost” (2 Ne. 31:17).

After Alvin Smith’s death in 1823, the Smith family was forced to worry about his eternal status when a minister implied that he had gone to hell because he was unchurched and probably unbaptized.⁹ Joseph Smith, Jr., must have brought the family great comfort when he dictated the words of King Benjamin that Jesus’ “blood atoneth for the sins of those . . . who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned” (Mos. 3:11; 15:24). Seven years later, on 21 January 1836, Smith received a revelation that “all who have died without a knowledge of this Gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of

God.”¹⁰ Later, in 1840, when Smith instituted the doctrine of baptism for the dead in Nauvoo, his brother Hyrum was baptized for Alvin.¹¹

Both Seekers and Primitivists rejected infant baptism, which the Roman church had long maintained. Their rejection is best understood within the context of the general revolt against Calvinism. Under the Puritan system, children were included in the covenant of their parents, being “born in the covenant.” When Puritan infants were baptized, it was not for a remission of sin, though the rhetoric of Puritans who defended infant baptism by referring to the doctrine of “original sin” would have led opponents to think otherwise.¹² Rather, infants were baptized as a “seal” of the covenant of grace into which they were born by virtue of the faith of their parents. “The faith of the parent,” John Cotton explained, “doth bring the Children and household of a Christian, even now in the days of the new Testament, under a Covenant of salvation, as well as the faith of Abraham brought his household of old under the same covenant.”¹³ In fact, it was argued that the baptism of infants was justified on the grounds that baptism had replaced the circumcision of infants under the old law.¹⁴

As children they were regarded as members of the church but were not permitted to partake of the communion or assume the duties and privileges of covenant members until they could demonstrate a “saving faith” in their lives. However, because the second generation’s spirituality seemed to lag behind that of their parents, the Half-Way Covenant was developed in 1662 to allow the unconverted children of church members to retain their incomplete membership after becoming adults. Thus the “unregenerated” children of covenant members could have their own child baptized if they would publicly declare to “own the covenant” into which they had been born and which had been sealed upon them by baptism.

Primitivists and Seekers responded to the Puritan system of infant baptism. Alexander Campbell said in 1828 that “the question of infant baptism is now generally discussed all over the land.”¹⁵ The Campbellites held infant baptism, no matter the reason, to be nothing but a popish “corruption.”¹⁶ Campbell, a former Presbyterian, declared on 5 May 1828: “If baptism be connected with the remission of sins, infants require it not; for they have no sins to be remitted—at least the Calvinists and Arminians teach

this doctrine; for they say that 'original sin' is all that is chargeable upon infants."¹⁷

In 1824, Campbell also wrote: "Can the rite of sprinkling an infant with consecrated water, O! Calvinist! alter the decree of heaven? . . . Can the neglect of a parent to bring to you their infant offspring, seal the destruction of that infant? Who gave you the right of thus consigning to endless woe unsprinkled infants, and of opening heaven by a few drops of water to those impaled in your fold?"¹⁸ Campbell believed that "all infants dying shall be saved."¹⁹ Seekers in Europe and England also questioned the necessity of baptizing children,²⁰ as did George Fox and the Quakers, and, in America, Roger Williams.²¹

For Alexander Campbell the Book of Mormon's discussion of "infant baptism" was suspiciously modern.²² Infant baptism becomes an issue among the Nephites after the coming of Jesus Christ when circumcision is done away. Mormon writes to his son Moroni:

There have been disputations among you concerning the baptism of your little children. And now, my son, I desire that ye should labor diligently, that this gross error should be removed from among you . . . The word of the Lord came to me by the power of the Holy Ghost, saying: Listen to the words of Christ, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God. Behold, I came into the world not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance [cf. Matt. 9:13]; the whole need no physician, but they that are sick; wherefore, little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them; and the law of circumcision is done away in me (Moro. 8:5-8).

Those opposing infant baptism in Joseph Smith's day were familiar with Mormon's argument.²³

Seekers, Primitivists, and Mormons thus more or less agreed about issues related to baptism. However, the nature of the gift of the Holy Ghost was a matter of contention between Primitivists such as Alexander Campbell and those seeking a more radical restoration of primitive Christianity. Campbell taught that receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost did not imply receiving the spiritual gifts manifested in the ancient church. Rather, those who received the Holy Ghost would be blessed with the fruits of the Spirit, which included such things as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Gal.

5:22–23). Campbell declared that the miraculous work of the Holy Ghost was “confined to the apostolic age, and to only a portion of the saints who lived in that age.”²⁴ Much as the Puritans and Anglicans had argued with English Seekers, Campbell asserted that miracles which accompanied the ministry of the apostles confirmed the new religion and proved its divine origin, but that the miraculous preaching of the gospel was for a “limited time” and that time had “expired.”²⁵

Seekers waited for the gifts of the spirit. They believed in the literal fulfillment of Jesus’ words: “These signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (Mk. 16:17–18).²⁶ If spiritual manifestations were absent, so was the Holy Ghost, according to Seekers. Without the Holy Ghost there was no salvation. The absence of spiritual gifts indicated that the first step of faith had not been completed. Without saving faith, baptism was a dead work. For Seekers, then, the outward spiritual manifestations were indications that the inward work of salvation had been completed.

Asa Wild argued that only apostate Christianity denied spiritual gifts and that “whosoever denies these gifts to be the common privileges of all christians, ‘taketh away from the Book of God, and God shall take away his part, out of the Book of life, and out of the Holy City’ [Rev. 22:19].” Wild further asserted that “christians may, in these days, possess the ‘discernment of spirits,’ immediate and infallible inspiration, power to ‘baptise with the Holy Ghost,’ &c. &c.”²⁷ Without the workings of the spirit, one could not even be regenerated and cleansed from sin, Wild argued. But through the Spirit, the Christian is “perfectly restored to the image of his heavenly Father.”²⁸

Among former Campbellites, Sidney Rigdon led the opposition to Campbell’s version of the restoration. Rigdon argued that “along with the primitive gospel, supernatural gifts and miracles ought to be restored.”²⁹ Early Mormonism also stressed the importance of the gift of the Holy Ghost in achieving salvation. Christ declares to the Nephites:

No unclean thing can enter into his [God’s] kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith,

and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end. Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day (3 Ne. 27: 19-20).

In his closing words, Moroni asks: "Have miracles ceased because Christ hath ascended into heaven, and hath sat down on the right hand of God, to claim of the Father his rights of mercy which he hath upon the children of men?" (Moro. 7:27). He then answers his own question. "It is by faith that miracles are wrought; and it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men; wherefore, if these things have ceased wo be unto the children of men, for it is because of unbelief, and all is vain. For no man can be saved, according to the words of Christ, save they shall have faith in his name; wherefore, if these things have ceased, then has faith ceased also" (Moro. 7:37-38).

The Book of Mormon also connects the outward manifestation of spiritual gifts with the inward reception of the Holy Ghost. Thus, Nephi promises, "Yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost; and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel" (2 Ne. 31:13). As if speaking to latter-day Primitivists, Nephi says, "Ye ponder somewhat in your hearts concerning that which ye should do after ye have entered in by the way [of baptism] . . . If ye cannot understand them it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock; wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark. For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do" (32:2-5).

When Joseph Smith passed through Cincinnati in June 1831, he spoke briefly with Walter Scott, one of the founders of the Campbellites. "Before the close of our interview," Smith reported, "he [Scott] manifested one of the bitterest spirits against the doctrine of the New Testament (that 'these signs shall follow them that believe,' as recorded in Mark the 16th chapter,) that I ever witnessed among men."³⁰ At the funeral of King Follett on 7 April 1844, nearly thirteen years later, Smith declared: "[One] must be born of W[ater]. & Sp[irit] in order to get into the K[ingdom] of God. . . . John [the Baptist] says I bap[tize] you with Water but when J[esus] comes who has the power he shall adm[inister] the bap[tism] of F[ire] & the H[oly]. G[host]. . . . Alex Campbell—

how are you going to save them with water—for John s[ai]d. his bap[tis]m. was nothing with[out]. the bap[tism] of J[esus]. C[hrist].”³¹

Such emphasis on the Holy Spirit and the possibility of its continuing influence inclined both Seekers and Mormons towards a belief in perfectionism.³² With the decline of Calvinistic determinism, the idea of human and social perfectibility had become increasingly popular. The era from about 1815 to about 1860 marks a rise in religious and secular reform movements, all of which were in some way heirs of the Arminian theology of evangelical revivalism of the early decades of the nineteenth century. Arminianism’s rejection of Calvinistic predestination and moral depravity placed the burden of salvation on individual actions. God endowed humankind with the will to choose good over evil—to go from grace to grace—until perfect.³³ Those groups affected by Arminian theology were also affected in some measure by perfectionism.

Quakers were also perfectionists. George Fox, for example, taught that “Christ within is sufficient for all things to teach them, and to make them perfect as he is, and as God is.”³⁴ Alexander Campbell also taught a version of human perfectibility. “Perfection is . . . the glory and felicity of man,” he declared in 1852. “There is a true, a real perfectability of human character and of human nature, through the soul-redeeming mediation and holy spiritual influence of the great Philanthropist.”³⁵

Transcendentalism was perhaps the extreme expression of perfectionism. A theory of infinite perfectibility flowed quite naturally from the concept of free-will. “I believe in Eternal Progression,” wrote Margaret Fuller to James Freeman Clark; “I believe in a God, a Beauty and Perfection to which I am to strive all my life for assimilation.”³⁶ George Ripley insisted that “man has the power of conceiving a perfection higher than he has ever reached. Not only so. He can make this perfection a distinct object of pursuit.”³⁷ Bronson Alcott said in 1840: “Every soul feels at times the possibility of becoming a God; she cannot rest in the human, she aspires after the God-like. This instinctive tendency is an authentic augury of its own fulfillment. Men shall become Gods.”³⁸

It was during this period, while Transcendentalism was popular, that Joseph Smith announced the new Mormon doctrine of men and women becoming “gods” (D&C 132:20). On 7 April 1844 at the funeral of King Follett, Smith delivered a sermon in which

he declared to his audience, "You have got to learn how to make yourselves God . . . by going from a small to a great capacity."³⁹ Godhood as the ultimate potential of humanity was the end result of the early Mormon emphasis on perfectionism.

The seeds for this radical doctrine of human potential are found in the concept of human perfectibility described in the Book of Mormon. The book teaches that humanity because of the Fall became "carnal, sensual, and devilish, by nature" (Al. 42:10), but that men and women can improve and overcome their nature. King Benjamin teaches his people that "the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father" (Mos. 3:19).

The Book of Mormon also speaks about reaching perfect sanctification in this life. Moroni closes his book with the exhortation to "come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ. . . . If ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ" (Moro. 10:32–33). The Book of Mormon's emphasis on works is therefore congruent with the notion of perfectionism. Nephi declares, "we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Ne. 25:23). At the end all men will be "judged according to their works" (2 Ne. 28:23; 29:11; Al. 3:26; 40:21; 42:23; etc.).

Similarly, the "Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ" expresses a belief in sanctification through achievement and explained the proper role of grace within this context: "And we know that justification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true; and we know also, that sanctification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true, to all those who love and serve God with all their mights, minds, and strength" (D&C 20:30–31). An October 1832 article in *The Evening and the Morning Star* argues in a similar vein: "Because we were born in sin, the Gospel concludes, that we ought to apply all our attentive endeavours to eradicate the

seeds of corruption, . . . and so to answer the excellence of our extraction [as the children of God].”⁴⁰

Although perfectionism was part of early Mormonism, the persecution of the Saints in Jackson County, Missouri, seems to have “intensified the emphasis on perfectionism,” according to Mormon historian Thomas G. Alexander, “which eventually led to the doctrine of eternal progression.” Alexander sees the promise of perfectibility assuaging the suffering of persecution.⁴¹

An article which appeared in the Kirtland reprint of *The Evening and the Morning Star*, originally printed in Missouri, declared in 1834 that “God has created man with a mind capable of instruction, and a faculty which may be enlarged in proportion to the heed and diligence given to the light communicated from heaven to the intellect; and that the nearer man approaches perfection, the more conspicuous are his views, and the greater his enjoyments, until he has overcome the evils of this life and lost every desire of sin; and like the ancients, arrives to that point of faith that he is wrapped in the power and glory of his Maker and is caught up to dwell with him.”⁴² Joseph Smith’s “Lectures on Faith” argued that men and women can become God-like, purifying themselves to become “holy as he is holy, and perfect as he is perfect” and that “it is in the power of man to keep the law and remain also without sin.”⁴³

A few of Smith’s early revelations contain an extreme expression of perfectionism—declaring in 1832 that heirs of the celestial kingdom were “gods, even the sons of God” (D&C 76:58) and that the “saints shall . . . be made equal with him [God]” (88:107). But Alexander has argued that “the implications of this doctrine were not generally evident in the Mormon community until 1838.”⁴⁴ If parallel passages from the Bible (Ps. 82:6; Jn. 10:34–36; 1 Jn. 3:2) obscured these early expressions of extreme perfectionism, all doubt was removed by Smith’s explicit teachings in Nauvoo, Illinois, during the 1840s.

The development of other distinctive doctrines during Mormonism’s formative period had their roots in the doctrine of human perfectibility. If the doctrine of human perfection inevitably led to human deification, the idea that humans were gods in embryo opened the way for other theological developments. As one scholar has noted, “The idea that humans could become gods allowed for the possibility that they were ultimately like God—uncreated.”⁴⁵ By the mid-1830s, Smith had rejected the standard Protestant/Catholic teaching that humankind, as created beings,

were contingent and finite and advocated instead the doctrine of a pre-mortal existence. "The Spirit of Man is not a created being," he declared in 1839. "It existed from Eternity and will exist to eternity. Anything created cannot be eternal."⁴⁶ Thus even the traces of Calvinism displayed in the Book of Mormon were becoming less and less discernible as Smith developed humans into something worthy of godhood.

Smith not only saw a plurality of gods in the eternal future but also in an eternal past. The idea that humans could become gods irresistibly led to the conclusion that God was once human. "Jesus said all things that he had saw the father Do he had done & that he done Nothing But what he saw the father do John the 5th [verse 19]," Smith taught in 1841.⁴⁷ To Smith, this meant not only that God was once human but also that God was resurrected and continued as a corporal being.⁴⁸ The pattern for making future gods was projected backwards, leading to the assertion that there is a plurality of gods (D&C 121:28). Despite resistance within the Mormon community to the plurality of gods doctrine, Smith continued to preach on the subject.⁴⁹ When he began to publish his translation of the Egyptian papyri in 1842, his plurality of gods doctrine received some ancient support. According to Smith's translation, the ancient patriarch Abraham held that the earth was created by a counsel of "Gods" (Abra. 4:1-5:21). However, Mormons began using the term "plurality of gods" to distinguish their doctrine from the polytheism of ancient religions. Thus Mormonism's anthropomorphism attempted to bring God down from the unapproachable haze of high-minded theological speculation while at the same time its transcendentalism tried to raise humans from the dust of the Calvinistic concept of depravity.

This commitment in the Mormon movement to perfectionism can be seen influencing Smith's developing doctrine of the afterlife, which eventually collapsed traditional notions about heaven and hell. In elaborating the specifics of life after death for perfectible humans, Smith effected a mediation of sorts between Universalism and perfectionism. In doing this he moved Mormon theology beyond the early framework which it shared with the Book of Mormon and with Seekers. A few Seekers such as William Erbery and Richard Coppin were Universalists. They argued that since God's spirit was in all things, all things would be saved. George Fox took a middle position, stating that the spirit was in all things but only those who realized they possessed the spirit

were elected.⁵⁰ However, most Seekers, such as Erastus Hanchett, were anti-universalists, believing that universalism tended to discourage the quest for moral perfection which Seekers found so important.

As elaborated in chapter four, the Book of Mormon joined with most Seekers in condemning both universalistic and restorationist notions. Still the very month that the Book of Mormon rolled off the press (March 1830), Smith dictated a revelation which can only be described as restorationist in content (D&C 19). Sensitive to the controversial nature of the doctrine, the revelation commands Smith and colleague Martin Harris to "show not these things unto the world until it is wisdom in me, for they cannot bear meat now" (19:21).

Smith was intimately acquainted with the debate between Universalism and orthodoxy, through his friends and acquaintances, his parents, and his grandfathers Solomon Mack and Asael Smith.⁵¹ As previously discussed, Joseph Smith Sr.'s liberal religion apparently included the notion of universal salvation, conflicting with Lucy Smith's conservatism which probably included the Presbyterian concept of heaven and hell.⁵²

In 1797, Asael was the moderator of a meeting establishing one of the early Universalist societies in Vermont. He and sixteen signers, including his sons Jesse and Joseph, declared exemption from "any tax towards the support of any teacher of any different denomination whatever," meaning the usual town tax for support of the Congregational Church.⁵³ Mormon historian Richard Anderson has pointed out that Asael subsequently appeared as a pew holder in the town meeting house and that Jesse Smith was an ardent Calvinist and a believer in the doctrine of election.⁵⁴ However, Asael appears to have been fairly committed to the universalist principle, for grandson George A. Smith remembered that Asael shortly before his death in 1830 "wrote many quires of paper on the doctrine of universal restoration."⁵⁵

In contrast, Lucy's side of the family was definitely opposed to universal salvation. Solomon Mack had come to denounce his Universalism, and Lucy leaned toward the Presbyterian's "Westminster Confession of Faith." Even before he "translated" the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith, Jr., decided against Universalism, since he later explained that he was "partial to the Methodist sect."⁵⁶ Thus the subject must have been charged with emotion in the Smith family, especially after Alvin's death in 1823.

Joseph Smith's eventual restorationist position was a compromise which accounted for both the mercy and the justice of God.

The March 1830 revelation declared that "surely every man must repent or suffer" (D&C 19:4). However, the revelation went on to state that "it is not written that there shall be no end to this torment" (19:6), explaining that the scriptural terms "endless torment" and "eternal damnation" refer to God's punishment. In the revelation, God explains, "I am endless, and the punishment which is given from my hand is endless punishment, for Endless is my name. Wherefore—Eternal punishment is God's punishment. Endless punishment is God's punishment" (19:10–12).⁵⁷ Further, the revelation teaches the hallmark tenet of restorationism, that the unrepentant must suffer for their own sins (19:15–20).⁵⁸

Later, in February 1832, while revising the New Testament, Smith and Sidney Rigdon received a vision which explained that all but a few would be saved in one of three heavens (D&C 76).⁵⁹

And this is the gospel, the glad tidings, . . . that he came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for he world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness; that through him all might be saved whom the Father had put into his power and made by him; who glorifies the Father, and saves all the works of his hands, except those sons of perdition who deny the Son after the Father has revealed him (D&C 76:40–43).

This vision was occasioned by Smith's work on the inspired revision of the Bible. In February 1832 he came to John 5:29, which speaks of the resurrection of some unto "life" and others unto "damnation." This passage was often used by those in Smith's day who opposed the doctrine of universal salvation.⁶⁰ However, Smith was inspired to change the passage to refer to the resurrection of the "just" and the "unjust" (D&C 76:17). The softening of the passage allowed Smith to introduce a modified restorationist position on the afterlife.

Smith's vision thus solved the major weakness in restorationism—that of regarding the commandments too lightly. He could now explain the mercy of God without neglecting God's justice. Smith's early apprehensions about publicly presenting the doctrine were realized, however, for even this version of restorationism provoked resistance within the Mormon community.⁶¹ Smith instructed the missionaries not to speak about "The Vision," which probably accounts for lack of anti-Mormon attention to the subject.⁶² However, Presbyterian minister Truman Coe, who lived

among the Latter-day Saints in Kirtland, mentioned in his 1836 description of Mormonism that they "believe in the final restoration of all men except apostate Mormons."⁶³

Mormonism's moral perfectionism also inclined the church towards social utopianism—an inclination which separated Mormons from Disciples of Christ but united them with more radical Primitivists. In general evangelical Arminianism had awakened interest in social improvement as a corollary to belief in human perfection. A host of humanitarian reform movements flourished in antebellum America. School improvements, prison reforms, mental hospitals, factory conditions, alcoholism, war, poverty, the status of women, and slavery all were issues which concerned social reformers. Some tried to demonstrate their social commitments by establishing small utopian communities.

Social experimentation had been part of the American experience from the beginning. The Puritans traveled to the New World to establish a society patterned after Calvin's Geneva. However, religious dissent and economic realities intruded upon their dream. Still, America's sense of mission and its ideas about "manifest destiny" have roots in Puritan New England.⁶⁴ The importance of community righteousness for the survival of the nation, an idea expressed in Puritan writings, also concerned antebellum social reformers.

Some Utopian communities were religious, others secular. Secular experiments included Robert Dale Owen's group in New Harmony, Indiana, the North American Phalanx in New Jersey, Bronson Alcott's Fruitlands in Harvard, Massachusetts, and George Ripley's transcendental Brook Farm Institute of Agriculture and Education at West Roxbury, Massachusetts. Christian communities were generally more successful; notable examples include Mother Ann Lee's Shaker community and John Humphrey Noyes's Oneida community. These groups, like the Mormons, originated in western New York.

Alexander Campbell had rejected the social experiments conducted by Sidney Rigdon and his followers.⁶⁵ Since Rigdon's group joined the new Mormon movement, some have asserted that Smith borrowed his communitarian ideas from Rigdon. But the Mormon movement seems to have been headed in such a direction even before contact with Rigdon. Rigdon had based his experiment on a radical interpretation of Acts 2:43-44 and 4:32. Smith had precedent for such experimentation in his own family. In 1804

his uncle Jason Mack, a Seeker, had become the leader of a communal experiment in New Brunswick.⁶⁶ The Book of Mormon described similar experiments which occurred among the Nephites after Jesus' appearance: "They had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift" (4 Ne. 1:3). When the Nephites apostatized two centuries later, the Book of Mormon explains that they began to be "lifted up in pride, such as the wearing of costly apparel, and all manner of fine pearls, and of the fine things of the world. And from that time forth they did have their goods and their substance no more common among them. And they began to be divided into classes; and they began to build up churches unto themselves to get gain, and began to deny the true church of Christ" (4 Ne. 1:24-26).

Very early Smith tried to distinguish his version of communitarianism from Rigdon's. Rigdon's "disciples had all things common, and were going to destruction very fast as to temporal things," John Whitmer wrote in his early history. "They considered from reading the scripture that what belonged to a brother, belonged to any of the brethren. Therefore they would take each others [sic] cloths and other property and use it without leave which brought on confusion and disappointment, for they did not understand the scripture."⁶⁷

On 9 February 1831, Smith dictated a revelation which ended Rigdon's experiment. "Thou shalt not take thy brother's garment," God commanded. Instead, God said, "thou shalt pay for that which thou shalt receive of thy brother" (D&C 42:54). In the place of a strictly communistic society, the Saints were to follow "the Law of Consecration of Property." In this system, individuals managed their own "stewardship" with all surplus of products going to the common "store-house" to be distributed according to need (D&C 42:30-39, 55). This compromise balanced Jacksonian individualism and the Puritan sense of community, as well as the religious obligation to care for the poor. It combined elements of communitarianism and capitalism.⁶⁸

The Mormon version of communitarianism was attempted in Missouri but received little support and was ultimately abandoned when the Saints were driven from their lands. Their failure to observe the Law of Consecration was cited as one reason for their persecutions (D&C 103:1-4; 104:1-18, 47-53). Tithing was instituted in its place, whereby one-tenth of one's income was donated to the church (D&C 119). Thus, in Nauvoo, Illinois,

in the 1840s, as in any American community, class distinction was recognizable, for Mormons had not succeeded in establishing social and economic equality.⁶⁹

— NOTES —

1. William Dell, *The Tryall of Spirits Both in Teachers and Hearers* (London, 1653), 19; John Saltmarsh, *Sparkles of Glory* (London, 1647), 270; Thomas Collier, *A General Epistle to the Universal Church of the First Born* (London, 1648), 38.

2. See, for example, George Fox, *A Journal*, ed. Margaret Fox (London, 1694), 89, 102, 203, 264, 359, 397.

3. [Asa Wild], *A Short Sketch of the Religious Experience, and Spiritual Travels of Asa Wild, of Amsterdam, N.Y. Written by himself by Divine Command, and the most infallible Inspiration* (Amsterdam, NY: printed for the author by D. Wells, 1824), 55, 56, 83, 81.

4. Erastus Hanchett, *A Serious Call in Christian Love* (Boston, [1825]), 19, 9.

5. See Samuel Macauley Jackson, et al., eds., *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 12 vols. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1908–12), 10:235.

6. John Russell Bartlett, ed., “Letters of Roger Williams, 1632–1682,” in *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams*, 7 vols. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), 6:188.

7. Royal Humbert, ed., *A Compend of Alexander Campbell’s Theology* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1961), 198.

8. Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System*, 6th ed. (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., n.d.), 174. Originally published in 1839.

9. Lucy [Mack] Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations* (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1853), 91; William Smith interview with E. C. Briggs and J. W. Peterson in *Deseret News* (Salt Lake City), 20 Jan. 1894.

10. Joseph Smith, Jr., et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1964), 2:380–81, hereafter HC; cf. D&C 137:7.

11. “Nauvoo Baptisms for the Dead,” Book A, Church Genealogical Society Archives, in Larry C. Porter, “Alvin Smith: Reminder of the Fairness of God,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1978, 67n7. See also Richard Lloyd Anderson, “The Alvin Smith Story,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1987, 72n76.

12. See, for example, Jonathan Dickinson, *Remarks upon Mr. Gales Reflections on Mr. Walls History of Infant Baptism* ([New York], 1721), 41, 56; and Joseph Morgan, *The Portsmouth disputation examined, being a brief answer to arguments used by the anti-Paedo-Baptists* (New York, 1713), 10.

13. John Cotton, *The Grounds and Ends of the Baptisme of Children of the Faithfull* (London, 1647), 48.

14. See, for example, Dickinson, *Remarks*, 41, 51–52, 54; and Morgan, *Portsmouth disputation*, 42ff.

15. *Christian Baptist* 5 (7 Jan. 1828): 138.

16. *Christian Baptist* 4 (3 Dec. 1827): 109, 116; 3 (3 April 1826): 181.
17. *Christian Baptist* 5 (5 May 1828): 231–32. On Campbell's rejection of infant baptism, see William D. Carpe, "Baptismal Theology in the Disciples of Christ," *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 14 (Oct. 1979): 65–78.
18. *Christian Baptist* 1 (5 April 1824): 183.
19. *Christian Baptist* 3 (6 Feb. 1826): 141.
20. See *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 10:235. See also John Wilkinson, "A reproof of some things written by John Morton [Murton], and others of his Company and followers, to prove *That Infants are not in the state of Condemnation*; And that therefore they are not to be Baptised," published posthumously in William Arthurbury, *The Sealed Fountain opened to the Faithfull, and their Seed: or, A short Treatise, shewing, that some Infants are in the state of Grace, and capable of the seals, and others not. Being the chief point, wherein the Separatists doe blame the Anabaptists* (London, 1646).
21. George Fox, *A Journal*, ed. Margaret Fox (London, 1694), 24; W. Clark Gilpin, *The Millenarian Piety of Roger Williams* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 52–54.
22. Alexander Campbell, "The Mormonites," *Millennial Harbinger* 2 (Feb. 1831): 93.
23. See, for example, Dickinson, *Remarks*, 41, 43, 51–54, who defends infant baptism using arguments of original sin and circumcision, and Morgan, *Portsmouth disputation*, 10, 42, 47ff., who mentions that the antipedobaptists argued against original sin and baptism replacing circumcision.
24. In Joseph W. White, "The Influence of Sidney Rigdon upon the Theology of Mormonism," M.A. thesis, University of Southern California, 1947, 127.
25. *Christian Baptist* (reprint; Cincinnati, 1835), 89–91, 95, in Milton V. Backman, Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830–1838* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 16, 395n37.
26. There is no parallel passage in any of the other gospels, and it is generally held by New Testament scholars that the closing section of the gospel of Mark (16:9–20) was added in the second century.
27. Wild, *Short Sketch*, 45, 50.
28. *Ibid.*, 15–17, 19, 21.
29. Alexander Campbell, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell Embracing a View of the Origin, Progress, and Principles of the Religious Reformation Which He Advocated*, ed. Robert Richardson, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1868), 2:346. See also John Murdock, *Autobiography*, 16, in Richard Lloyd Anderson, "The Impact of the First Preaching in Ohio," *Brigham Young University Studies* 11 (Summer 1971): 482–83; and Parley P. Pratt, Jr., ed., *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 26, 31–32.
30. HC 1:188.
31. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, comps. and eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 354.
32. William Dell, *The Crucified and Quickened Christian* (London, 1652), 5. See also William Erbery, *The Testimony* (London, 1658), 8; Nicholas Couling, *The Saints Perfect in This Life; Or Never* (London, 1647); George Hassal, *Designe of God in the Saints* (London, 1648), 32.

33. On nineteenth-century reform movements, see Alice Felt Tyler, *Freedom's Ferment: Phases of American Social History to 1860* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1944); John Mayfield, *The New Nation, 1800-1845* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982); Ronald Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); John L. Thomas, "Romantic Reform in America, 1815-1865," *American Quarterly* 17 (Winter 1965): 656-81; Clifford S. Griffin, "Religious Benevolence as Social Control, 1815-1860," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 44 (Dec. 1957): 423-44; and Lois W. Banner, "Religious Benevolence as Social Control: A Critique of an Interpretation," *Journal of American History* 60 (June 1973): 23-41.

34. George Fox, *A Journal*, ed. William Penn (Philadelphia, 1831), 3:37.

35. Humbert, *Compend of Alexander Campbell's Theology*, 231.

36. *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli*, ed. R. W. Emerson, W. H. Channing, and J. F. Clarke (London: R. Bentley, 1852), 1:177.

37. George Ripley, *Discourse on the Philosophy of Religion* (Boston: J. Munroe, 1836), 39.

38. *Dial* 1 (July 1840): 87.

39. Scott H. Faulring, *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), 465.

40. *The Evening and the Morning Star*, Oct. 1832, [35].

41. Thomas G. Alexander, "The Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine: From Joseph Smith to Progressive Theology," *Sunstone* 5 (July/Aug. 1980): 27.

42. In *ibid.*, 26.

43. D&C 1835 edition, 53, 67.

44. Alexander, "Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine," 27, 33n20. See also Van Hale, "The Doctrinal Impact of the King Follett Discourse," *Brigham Young University Studies* 18 (Winter 1978): 215n30.

45. Blake Ostler, "The Idea of Pre-Existence in the Development of Mormon Thought," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15 (Spring 1982): 61; see also Hale, "Doctrinal Impact," 213-15.

46. In Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 9.

47. In *ibid.*, 61.

48. For example, Smith said "the Son Had a Tabernicle & so had the father But the Holly Ghost is a personage of spirit without tabernicle." See *ibid.*, 64; cf. D&C 130:22. See also Hale's discussion in "Doctrinal Impact," 218-20; James B. Allen, "Emergence of a Fundamental: The Expanding Role of Joseph Smith's First Vision in Mormon Religious Thought," *Journal of Mormon History* 7(1980): 49-50. Paving the way for the development of Mormonism's anthropomorphic view of God was its early rejection of trinitarianism. The Book of Mormon and several early revelations present a "modalistic" view, making no distinction between the "person" of the Father and the "person" of the Son (Mos. 3:5-8, 15:1-7; Al. 11:28-29, 38-39; Eth. 3:14, 16, 4:12; D&C 20:28; 11:2, 10, 28; 29:1, 42, 46). In the mid-1830s Mormonism adopted a binitarian position, teaching that "the Father [is] a personage of spirit, . . . the Son . . . a personage of tabernacle, . . . possessing the same mind with the Father, which mind is the Holy Spirit . . . these three are one" (D&C 1835 ed., 52-53). At the same time, Smith's recitals of his first vision began to reflect a binitarian view of the Godhead. Where his

1832 version had described the appearance of only Jesus Christ, in the mid-1830s Smith began to include an appearance of the Father. See Milton V. Backman, Jr., *Joseph Smith's First Vision: Confirming Evidences and Contemporary Accounts*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 155–81. It is possible that this shift was influenced by Sidney Rigdon's Primitivist background. For the tendency of those in the primitive gospel movement toward binitarianism, see I. Daniel Rupp, comp., *He Pasa Ekklesia. An Original History of the Religious Denominations at Present Existing in the United States* (Philadelphia, 1844), 169; and Humbert, *Compend of Alexander Campbell's Theology*, 116n4. Finally, in the early 1840s Mormonism advocated a tritheistic position. See Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 63, 173, 268–69n5; *Times and Seasons* 3 (15 Sept. 1842): 926; and D&C 130:22. For discussions of the developing Mormon doctrine of deity, see Van Hale, "Defining the Mormon Doctrine of Deity," *Sunstone* 10 (1985): 23–27; Alexander, "Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine," 24–33; Boyd Kirkland, "Jehovah as the Father: The Development of the Mormon Jehovah Doctrine," *Sunstone* 9 (Autumn 1984): 36–44; and "Elohim and Jehovah in Mormonism and the Bible," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19 (Spring 1986): 77–93.

49. While delivering a sermon on the plurality of gods on 16 June 1844, Smith mentioned the resistance to the doctrine. See Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 378, 408n4. The wording of D&C 121:28, originally a letter written to the church by Smith from Liberty Jail in March 1839, may also indicate some early resistance to the subject of a plurality of gods.

50. Erbery's and Coppin's universalism, as well as Fox's intermediary position, has been pointed out in George Arthur Johnson, "From Seeker to Finder: A Study in Seventeenth-Century English Spiritualism Before the Quakers," *Church History* 17 (1948): 312.

51. Martin Harris, who became acquainted with Smith in 1827, held universalistic notions. See E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled [sic]; or, A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, from Its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, OH: E. D. Howe, 1834), 260–61; and John A. Clark, *Gleanings By the Way* (Philadelphia, 1842), 223. Joseph Knight, Sr., of Colesville, New York, who befriended Smith in the mid-1820s, was also a Universalist. See "Newel Knight's Journal," in *Scraps of Biography* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1883), 47; and HC 1:81.

52. Orsamus Turner reported that "the elder Smith had been a Universalist, and subsequently a Methodist." O[rsamus] Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement of Phelps and Gorham's Purchase* (Rochester, 1851), 213.

53. Tunbridge Town Record (6 Dec. 1797), 188, in Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Joseph Smith's New England Heritage: Influences of Grandfathers Solomon Mack and Asael Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 106.

54. Tunbridge Town Record, 196, in Anderson, *Joseph Smith's New England Heritage*, 207n185; and John Smith Journal, 20 Aug. 1836, in *ibid.*, 111.

55. George A. Smith to Humphrey Gould, 31 May 1870, in Anderson, *Joseph Smith's New England Heritage*, 105. George A. Smith also told Gould that he could never get hold of Asael's writings on Universalism because, he suspected, "they must have been suppressed by Uncle Jesse, who was a [Congregational] covenanter, lived near him and visited him nearly every day during his last illness" (see *ibid.*, 207n183). Smith family tradition has it

that although unbaptized, Asael was nevertheless converted to Mormonism shortly before his death on 1 November 1830. According to one of Asael's daughters-in-law, he declared on his deathbed "his full and firm belief in the everlasting gospel and also regretted that he was not baptized when Joseph his son was there and acknowledged that the doctrine of universalism, which he had so long advocated, was not true." George A. Smith wrote that his grandfather had accepted the Mormon gospel, although he "had been for many years a Universalist and exceedingly set in his way." M. Wilfred Poulson, ed., "Copy of an Old Notebook," 40-41, in Anderson, *Joseph Smith's New England Heritage*, 215n217; George A. Smith, "Memoirs," 2, in Anderson, *Joseph Smith's New England Heritage*, 112.

56. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 198.

57. See Elhanan Winchester, *A Course of Lectures, on the Prophecies that Remain to Be Fulfilled*, 2 vols. (Norwich, 1794), 1:282, where he explains that the scriptural terms "for ever" and "for ever and ever" have only a "limited nature"; and Hosea Ballou, *A Treatise on Atonement* (Randolph, VT, 1805), 161-62.

58. *Ibid.*, 1:21, 169, 277-79, 289-90.

59. Although the revelation left the destiny of "sons of perdition"—those who "deny the Son after the Father has revealed him"—unanswered (D&C 76:30-49), some members of the church began to teach that the devil, his angels, and the sons of perdition would be restored, which evoked a sharp denunciation from church authorities. See HC 1:366. See also C. A. Patrides, "The Salvation of Satan," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 28 (Oct.-Dec. 1967): 467-78.

60. See, for example, Samuel Hopkins, *An Inquiry Concerning the future State of those who die in their Sins* (Newport, RI, 1783), 32.

61. The adverse reaction of many early Mormons, including a majority of the Genesee branch in New York, is discussed in Tim Rathbone, "The Impact of the 'Vision' on the Membership of the Early Church," unpublished paper, 1987.

62. For Smith's instruction for the missionaries to suppress "The Vision," see HC 2:492; cf. 2:505. Grant Underwood's suggestion that the lack of anti-Mormon reaction to the vision indicates that "it was not initially seen as subversive to contemporary Protestant thought" rests on the argument from silence. In addition, his reasoning that early Mormons failed to realize the eschatological implications of the vision, continuing to believe their pre-Mormon Protestant creeds about heaven and hell, relies on selective evidence. The vision caused significant apostasy among the Mormons and became a hindrance to missionary work, as Rathbone has pointed out. The implications of the vision were therefore well understood. Oliver Cowdery's response to the Universalist minister who visited Kirtland in 1835—that "if no such principle exists as damnation, and that eternal, *to be inflicted upon such as do blaspheme*, he certainly has spoken nonsense and folly"—must be understood as a refutation of ultra-Universalism as well as a reference to the "sons of perdition" (*Messenger and Advocate* 1 [July 1835]: 151; emphasis added). When the Hulet branch was rebuked in 1833 for teaching the restoration of the devil and his angels and the sons of perdition, Cowdery was credited with declaring it "the doctrine of devils" (see HC 1:366). It is

in this context that Cowdery's words about Universalism are to be understood. See Grant Underwood, "'Saved or Damned': Tracing a Persistent Protestantism in Early Mormon Thought," *Brigham Young University Studies* 25 (Summer 1985): 85-103, and "The Earliest Reference Guides to the Book of Mormon: Windows into the Past," *Journal of Mormon History* 12 (1985): 78.

63. *The Ohio Observer*, 11 Aug. 1836, in Milton V. Backman, "Truman Coe's 1836 Description of Mormonism," *Brigham Young University Studies* 17 (Spring 1977): 354.

64. Russel B. Nye, *This Almost Chosen People: Essays in the History of American Ideas* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1966), chap. 4; Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

65. See F. Mark McKiernan, *The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness: Sidney Rigdon, Religious Reformer, 1793-1876* (Independence, MO: Herald House, 1979), 27.

66. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 52-53.

67. F. Mark McKiernan and Roger D. Launius, eds., *An Early Latter Day Saint History: The Book of John Whitmer, Kept by Commandment* (Independence, MO: Herald House, 1980), 37.

68. Leonard J. Arrington, "Early Mormon Communitarianism: The Law of Consecration and Stewardship," *Western Humanities Review* 7 (Autumn 1953): 342-43, recognizes the mediatory nature of Smith's version. See also Lyndon W. Cook, *Joseph Smith and the Law of Consecration* (Provo, UT: Grandin Book Co., 1985), 8. After listening to a lecture about Socialism on 14 September 1843, Smith responded by alluding to Rigdon's community at Kirtland and declared that he "did not believe the doctrine" (HC 6:33).

69. One visitor to Nauvoo, Illinois, for example, mentioned "the lofty mansions of the more wealthy, towering like the oaks of the forest, above their more humble rivals." See *Times and Seasons* 5 (1 June 1844): 548.

A New Jerusalem

For both Mormons and Seekers the end of the world was imminent and the voice of warning urgent. Both shared the view that the world was becoming increasingly wicked and that the Millennium would begin only after Jesus came to destroy the ungodly. Primitivists, along with most eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Protestants, believed that world conditions would improve and that the millennial era would be inaugurated before the Second Coming.

Since the early days of the Christian church believers have tried to anticipate prophesied latter-day events (Acts 1:6-7; Jn. 21:20-24), although the Catholic church declared itself to be the millennial kingdom referred to in Revelation 20:1-6. Millennial questions were revived during the Reformation by Anabaptists and others who saw the Catholic church as an object of divine wrath. In England, during the reign of the Stuarts, respected scientists, mathematicians, philosophers, and theologians attempted to decipher the images of Daniel and Revelation and to ascertain the date for the advent of the Millennium, which they variously calculated as sometime between 1640 and 1700.¹

The Puritans were caught up in this general millennial excitement. Thomas Brightman, a Puritan writing in the last years of Elizabeth's reign, expounded a millennialist view which assigned England a prominent role. Brightman believed that the Millennium had begun about the year 1300, that the church and kingdom would gradually become pure, and that Jesus would return to translate his kingdom into heaven and to destroy the great Roman beast.²

The Puritans of New England were avid millennialists. John Cotton believed that the Papacy would be abolished before the beginning of the Millennium and wrote several treatises on the

subject between 1642 and 1655. In 1660, Cambridge pastor Thomas Shepard warned backsliding Puritans of Jesus' advent and their duty to be prepared in his book *The Parable of the Ten Virgins Opened and Applied*.

Puritans could not resist trying to calculate the date of Jesus' appearance. In 1646 Thomas Parker, minister at Newberry, Massachusetts, published *The Visions and Prophecies of Daniel Expounded* which predicted the end of the world in about 1859. Deacon William Aspinwall of Boston, published in 1653 *A Brief Description of the Fifth Monarchy, or Kingdome That Shortly Is to Come into the World*, suggesting that the Millennium would begin no later than 1673. In *A Discourse Concerning Faith and Fervency in Prayer, and the Glorious Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, on Earth, Now Approaching* (1710), Increase Mather contended that the 1,260 years of the Antichrist's rule mentioned in Revelation 12:6 were "almost finished."

The Puritans were predictably great watchers of the "signs of the times." New England's famous "Dark Day," 19 May 1780, for example, was seen by Samuel Gatchel, deacon at Marblehead, as the fulfillment of the darkening of the sun preceding Jesus' advent (Joel 3:15; Acts 2:20).³ The French Revolution (1789–99) occasioned millennial excitement among various religious groups in the new republic. Both liberals, such as Unitarian Joseph Priestley, and conservatives, such as Yale's president Timothy Dwight, hailed the revolution as another wound upon "Anti-christian" Rome.⁴

In 1794 the Reverend David Austin of Elizabethtown, New Jersey, published *The Millennium; or, The Thousand Years of Prosperity, Promised to the Church of God, in the Old Testament and the New, Shortly to Commence*, which predicted that Jesus would return on 15 May 1796. After a long, anxious day of waiting, Austin stood before his congregation and preached from the text, "My Lord delayeth his coming."⁵ The Reverend Jedediah Morse, a Congregational pastor in Charlestown, Massachusetts, predicted in 1810 that the Millennium would dawn about 1866.⁶ Ethan Smith made similar calculations in his 1811 book *Dissertation on the Prophecies Relative to Antichrist and the Last Times*.⁷

Millennialism was an important element in nineteenth-century revivalism. During the Great Revival of 1800, Peter Cartwright remembered seeing various individuals in trances and visions, predicting the time of the end of the world and the ushering in of the Millennium.⁸ Revivalism and millennialism fueled

many of the reform movements of the nineteenth century.⁹ Revivalists believed in the gradual improvement of society before Jesus' advent.¹⁰

"If the church will do her duty," preeminent revivalist Charles G. Finney declared in 1835, "the millennium may come in this country in three years."¹¹ Mark Hopkins, president of Williams College, longed for the time when "wars, and intemperance, and licentiousness, and fraud, and slavery, and all oppression shall cease . . . through the transforming influence of Christianity."¹² However, millennialist optimism cooled somewhat during the Civil War. "We had flattered ourselves," wrote one editor during the war, "that we should escape the desolating wars which have marked the fluctuating fortunes of European Empire, and that in a pathway of unbroken peace we should sweep forward into the cloudless splendors of the Millennial era."¹³

Nineteenth-century America saw many adventist or millenarian groups which thrived primarily on a belief in the imminent appearance of Jesus. Irvingites, Millerites (many of whom became Seventh-Day Adventists), and Russellites (Jehovah's Witnesses) were among those groups stressing adventism and millenarianism.

Primitivists and Seekers generally differed in their beliefs about the Millennium. Most Primitivists, like the majority of Protestants in antebellum America, were postmillennialists: they believed that Jesus would come again after the Millennium had commenced, when the world had been made ready for him. "The Millennium," Alexander Campbell declared in 1841, "is to precede the coming of the Lord, the general conflagration, and the creation of new heavens and earth."¹⁴ In contrast, Seekers believed the Millennium would not begin until after Jesus destroyed the ungodly. Therefore their purpose was to call true believers out of spiritual Babylon.

Roger Williams was a literalistic Seeker who believed in the literal return of Jesus and the establishment of his millennial kingdom. Williams disputed with the Quakers because they rejected the physical return of Jesus to establish a literal kingdom.¹⁵ Quakers insisted that the thousand year reign of peace had been inaugurated and would continue to spread among true believers. They spiritualized and internalized the meaning of a millennial reign. Williams, like other Seekers, was a premillennialist who believed Jesus would "shortly" return "in flaming fire to burn up millions of ignorant and disobedient" to usher in the Millennium.¹⁶

For Seekers, the restoration of the true church would come in close proximity to the Millennium. In fact, Roger Williams asserted that the church would not be restored until Jesus' true apostles appeared to inaugurate the Millennium, which Williams believed was near at hand. He believed that the predicted time of the fulness of the Gentiles was about to begin (Rom. 11:25) and in 1652 declared, "The fullnesse of the Gentiles is not yet come, and probably shall not, untill the downfall of the Papacy."¹⁷ Williams believed that despite the lack of proper authority in any of the churches reformers served as forerunners of the restoration and were inspired by God to witness and testify against the "whore of Rome."¹⁸ "During the dreadfull Apostacy and Desolation, the Lord hath not left the World without witsnesse, but hath graciously and wonderfully stirred up his holy Prophets and Witnesses," Williams explained.¹⁹ He interpreted the ministry of the "two witnesses" in the eleventh chapter of Revelation as a reference to those who were persecuted for their dissension from the church of Rome. "The whole Books of Martyrs (or Witnesses) is nothing else but a large Commentary or History, of the Ministry of Witnesses, during all the Reigne of the Beast, to this day."²⁰ He believed that the period of witness was about to end and a period of restoration would begin, with the overthrow of spiritual Babylon.²¹ This would not be achieved without "great sufferings and slaughters of the Saints, upon occasion of which Christ Jesus in his holy wrath and jealousie, will burne and teare the bloody whore of Rome, in pieces."²² Thus according to Williams, ordinances would not be instituted nor churches established until the Millennium, but the saints were to be gathered out of spiritual Babylon to finish their testimony against the Beast.

Asa Wild believed that "various and dreadful judgments [are to be] executed immediately by God, through the instrumentality of the Ministers of the Millenial dispensation," although the actual Millennium would not begin for another seven years.²³ He predicted that the Millennium would be "preceded by a variety of secondary events," including the calling of apostle-like ministers²⁴ and the punishment of the wicked,²⁵ after which "the Millennium state of the world" would take place.²⁶

Mormons were also Millenarian. In the earliest account of Joseph Smith's first vision, Jesus says that "mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit them according to th[eir] ungodliness and to bring to pass that which hath been spoken by the mouth of the prophets and Ap[osto]stles. Behold and lo, I

come quickly as it [is] written of me, in the cloud clothed in the glory of my Father."²⁷ Smith also reported that the angel which visited him three times in 1829 quoted biblical prophecies concerning the Second Coming and the destruction of the wicked.²⁸

The Book of Mormon clearly advocates a premillennialist view. "For the time speedily cometh," declares Nephi, "that the Lord God shall cause a great division among the people, and the wicked will he destroy; and he will spare his people, yea, even if it so be that he must destroy the wicked by fire" (2 Ne. 30:10). Only after the destruction of the wicked can the words which the prophet Isaiah wrote concerning the earth's millennial rest be fulfilled (2 Ne. 30:11–15/ Isa. 11:5–9). Again, Nephi explains: "The time surely must come that all they who fight against Zion shall be cut off. . . . For the time speedily shall come that all churches which are built up to get gain . . . must be brought low in the dust; they are those who must be consumed as stubble; and this is according to the words of the prophet" (1 Ne. 22:19, 23; cf. Mal. 4:1). It is only after the destruction of the wicked that "Satan has no power" and "the Holy One of Israel must reign in dominion, and might, and power, and great glory" (1 Ne. 22:24, 26).

On 26 September 1830, Smith dictated a revelation in which God declared that "the hour is nigh and the day soon at hand when the earth is ripe; and all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; and I will burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that wickedness shall not be upon the earth For I will reveal myself from heaven with power and great glory, with all the hosts thereof, and dwell in righteousness with men on earth a thousand years, and the wicked shall not stand" (D&C 29:9, 11). The revelation describes the signs which will precede his coming:

Before this great day shall come the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall be turned into blood, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and there shall be greater signs in heaven above and in the earth beneath; and there shall be weeping and wailing among the hosts of men; and there shall be a great hailstorm sent forth to destroy the crops of the earth. And it shall come to pass, because of the wickedness of the world, that I will take vengeance upon the wicked, for they will not repent; for the cup of mine indignation is full; for behold, my blood shall not cleanse them if they hear me not (vv. 14–17).

Early Mormons were biblical literalists.²⁹ This predisposition is reflected in the Book of Mormon, which declares that the words of the prophets concerning the Millennium will be literally fulfilled. Nephi declares that the destruction of the wicked is not only spiritual but “cometh unto men according to the flesh if it so be that they will harden their hearts against the Holy One of Israel” (1 Ne. 22:18). After Nephi describes the destruction of the wicked and the establishment of the millennial kingdom of God, he states that “all these things must come according to the flesh” (22:27).

In the June 1834 issue of *The Evening and the Morning Star*, Oliver Cowdery complained of non-Mormon preachers’ attempts to “spiritualize” the Millennium.³⁰ Premillennialists, like Cowdery, often charged postmillennialists with avoiding the clear, literal meaning of biblical prophecy.³¹ “It is only the weak and vain schemes of men in spiritualizing and interpreting, which have rendered the bible obscure and unintelligible,” Cowdery lamented. “This whole spiritualizing and interpreting business, originated in unbelief.”³²

Like the early Puritans, the first Mormons scrutinized the events of their day for signs of God’s providence. *The Evening and the Morning Star*, published at the Mormon Zion (Independence, Missouri) and edited by William W. Phelps, delighted in pointing out various global catastrophies as signs of the end.³³ Like Seekers, Mormons believed the restoration of the true church was yet another sign of second advent. Commenting on the “restitution of all things” (Acts 3:21), Mormon apostle Parley P. Pratt explained in his popular 1837 pamphlet *A Voice of Warning*: “We . . . learn, that the time of restitution was to be at or near the time of Christ’s second coming, for the heavens are to receive him until the times of restitution, and then the Lord shall send him again to the earth.”³⁴ The Book of Mormon, Pratt wrote, “contains important prophesies, yet to be fulfilled, which immediately concerns the present generation.”³⁵ The Book of Mormon itself was also a sign of Jesus’ return. Mormon writes, “When the Lord shall see fit, in his wisdom, that these sayings shall come unto the Gentiles according to his word, then ye may know that the covenant which the Father hath made with the children of Israel, concerning their restoration to the lands of their inheritance, is already beginning to be fulfilled. And ye may know that the words of the Lord, which have been spoken by the holy prophets, shall all be fulfilled; and ye need not say that the Lord delays his coming unto the children of Israel” (3 Ne. 29:1–2).

Joseph Smith was uncertain how many years a full and complete millennial restoration would require. A revelation, given on 6 December 1832, for example, explained to Smith that the restored "priesthood . . . must needs remain through you and your lineage until the restoration of all things spoken by the mouths of all the holy prophets since the world began" (D&C 86:10; cf. 27:6; 127:8). As late as 1836, Smith was praying that God would establish his millennial kingdom in order that "thy church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness" (D&C 109:73).

Yet Mormonism had its share of millennial prognosticators. During the church's infancy, when charisma and religious enthusiasm had not yet been tempered by disappointment and delay, Mormons heaped judgments on their enemies and predicted the end within a very short time.³⁶ When the missionaries first arrived in the Ohio Reserve, the *Painesville Telegraph* reported in November 1830 that Oliver Cowdery "proclaims destruction upon the world within a few years."³⁷ The following month the *Ohio Star* reported that the missionaries "predicted the end of the world in 15 years."³⁸ The *Painesville Telegraph* also reported that upon his arrival in Kirtland on 12 March 1831, Martin Harris prophesied that "all who believed the new bible [the Book of Mormon] would see Christ within fifteen years, and all who did not would absolutely be destroyed and dam'd."³⁹ Later, Harris reportedly predicted that "within four years . . . there will not be one wicked person left in the United States; that the righteous will be gathered to Zion, [Missouri,] and that there will be no President over these United States after that time. . . . Every sectarian and religious denomination in the United States shall be broken down, and every Christian shall be gathered unto the Mormonites, and the rest of the human race shall perish."⁴⁰

It is important to note that Mormon predictions, like those of Seekers, were based not upon biblical calculations but revelation. Prophecy was one of the spiritual gifts promised the true believer (Moro. 10:13). Missionaries were instructed to "deny not the spirit of revelation, nor the spirit of prophecy" (D&C 11:21). In a revelation Joseph Smith dictated in November 1830, God told Orson Pratt that "the time is soon at hand that I shall come in a cloud with power and great glory." Pratt was to "lift up your voice and spare not, for the Lord God hath spoken; therefore prophesy, and it shall be given by the power of the Holy Ghost" (D&C 34:7, 10).

Joseph Smith did not date the Second Coming, but he expected, as did others, that it would take place in the immediate future. Smith's early revelations often noted the nearness of the return (D&C 33:18; 34:7, 12; 35:15, 27; 38:8; 39:24; 41:4). In June 1831, Levi Hancock reported that Smith said "the kingdom that Christ spoke of . . . would some day come. . . . Some of you shall live to see it come with great glory."⁴¹ On 4 January 1833 Smith wrote to the *American Revivalist*, and *Rochester Observer*:

I am prepared to say by the authority of Jesus Christ, that not many years shall pass away before the United States shall present such a scene of *bloodshed* as has not a parallel in the hystory [sic] of our nation pestalence hail famine and earthquake will sweep the wicked of this generation from off the face of this Land to open and prepare the way for the return of the lost tribes of Israel from the north country—The people of the Lord, those who have complied with the requisitions of the new covenant have already commenced gathering togethe[r] to Zion which is in the State of Missouri. Therefore I declare unto you the warning which the Lord has commanded me to declare unto this generation. . . . The hour of his Judgment is come. Repent ye Repent ye and imbrace the everlasting Covenant and flee to Zion before the overflowing scourge overtake you, *For there are those now living upon the earth whose eyes shall not be closed in death until they see all these things which I have spoken fulfilled.*⁴²

Early Mormon missionaries believed they were warning those who would face a final holocaust. This was a day of decision, in the words of Nephi, "either to the convincing of them unto peace and life eternal, or unto the deliverance of them to the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds unto their being brought down into captivity, and also into destruction, both temporally and spiritually" (1 Ne. 14:7). "It is the eleventh hour," God said in October 1830, "and the last time that I shall call laborers into my vineyard" (D&C 33:3; cf. 88:81–85).

In a revelation given in September 1832, God specifically instructed Bishop Newel K. Whitney to "go unto the city of New York, also to the city of Albany, and also the city of Boston, and warn the people of those cities with the sound of the gospel, with a loud voice, of the desolation and utter abolishment which await them if they do reject these things. For if they do reject these things the hour of their judgment is nigh, and their house shall be left unto them desolate" (D&C 84:114).⁴³ And unto "the rest of my servants," the Lord commanded:

go ye forth . . . unto the great and notable cities and villages, reproofing the world in righteousness of all their unrighteousness and ungodly deeds, setting forth clearly and understandingly the desolation of abomination in the last days. . . . Yet a little while and ye shall see it, and know that I am, and that I will come and reign with my people (D&C 84:117, 119; cf. 109:39–41).

As late as 1842, Mormon elder Freeman Nickerson published in the local newspaper a warning to the inhabitants of Boston: "I request the citizens and authorities of the city of Boston, to open a house for the servant of the people, that the Lord hath sent to this city to warn the people of the destruction which will take place *in this generation, that is now on earth*, and teach them how they may escape, and come through and abide the day of the second coming of Christ."⁴⁴

The event which made "the desolation of abomination" seem even more imminent and the "voice of warning" even more urgent came on 24 November 1832, when the South Carolina legislature, responding to the federal tariff acts of 1828 and 1832, passed laws to implement the Ordinance of Nullification. President Andrew Jackson countered by threatening to use force if necessary to uphold the new laws in rebellious states. These events were being followed very closely by the newspapers, including the *Painesville Telegraph*, which declared in mid-December that "civil war" was at hand and "unless some signal interposition shall arrest the course of events . . . our national existence is at an end."⁴⁵ On 25 December 1832, when this volatile situation seemed certain to explode at any moment into a national Armageddon, Joseph Smith penned his famous "Prophecy on War." This prophecy declares in part:

Verily, thus saith the Lord concerning the wars that will shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina, which will eventually terminate in the death and misery of many souls; and the time will come that war will be poured out upon all nations, beginning at this place. For behold, the Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States, and the Southern States will call on other nations, even the nation of Great Britain, as it is called, and they shall also call upon other nations, in order to defend themselves against other nations; and then war shall be poured out upon all nations. . . . Wherefore, stand ye in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come; for behold, it cometh quickly, saith the Lord. Amen (D&C 87:1–3, 8).⁴⁶

By March 1833 the immediate threat of civil war had subsided, and Smith chose not to publish his Prophecy on War with his other revelations.⁴⁷ When the Compromise of 1850 rekindled the conflict and national disaster threatened, the prophecy was included in the *The Pearl of Great Price*, a pamphlet published in 1851 in England—seven years after Joseph Smith's death.⁴⁸

The prospectus to the first Mormon periodical, *The Evening and the Morning Star*, notes that its purpose is to warn the world of impending destruction and to gather the elect to Zion.⁴⁹ Such anticipation of swift destruction contributed to a sense of urgency about the need to gather to Zion and conflicted with the popular Protestant view that conversion gathered spiritual Israel to the church. Thus Oliver Cowdery criticized the Campbellites in 1834 for reading references in scripture to the gathering of Israel as figurative.⁵⁰ In 1842, Joseph Smith announced that one of Mormonism's distinctive doctrines was belief "in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes."⁵¹ The Book of Mormon explained that righteous Gentiles gathered by God's latter-day messengers are like branches grafted onto the tree of Israel (1 Ne. 10:12–14; Jac. 5:1–6:8) and "shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel" (3 Ne. 16:13; 21:6; 30:2). The Gentiles would assist in gathering the Indian Israelites in the western hemisphere to share in the blessings promised to Israel.

The Book of Mormon describes two gathering places: one in old Jerusalem and the other on the American continent. When the resurrected Jesus visited the Nephites, he spoke about the New Jerusalem which was to be established in America, stating that it would become the center for gathering American Israelites. Jesus reminded these descendants of Lehi that they were "a remnant of the house of Israel" and heirs of the covenant (3 Ne. 20:10, 12). "This people," speaking of the latter-day Indians, "will I establish in this land, unto the fulfilling of the covenant which I made with your father Jacob; and it shall be a New Jerusalem. And the powers of heaven shall be in the midst of this people; yea, even I will be in the midst of you" (20:22).

Jesus also spoke of the blessings that awaited the faithful Gentiles in latter-day America:

Yea, wo be unto the Gentiles except they repent. . . . If they will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall

come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob [Indians], unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance; and they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob, and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem. And then shall they assist my people that they may be gathered in, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, in unto the New Jerusalem. And then shall the power of heaven come down among them; and I also will be in the midst (3 Ne. 21:14, 22–25).

The New Jerusalem was to be “a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the Most High God” (D&C 45:66): “And it shall come to pass among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety. And there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under heaven; and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another” (vv. 68–69).

In September 1830, Smith dictated a revelation in which God declared, “Ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect. . . . Wherefore the decree hath gone forth from the Father that they shall be gathered in unto one place upon the face of this land, to prepare their hearts and be prepared in all things against the day when tribulation and desolation are sent forth upon the wicked” (D&C 29:7–8). This New Jerusalem, designated as Zion (Independence) Missouri, was to enable the Saints to escape impending destruction and to prepare to receive Jesus Christ.⁵² “For without Zion, and a place of deliverance we must fall,” Smith explained in 1834. “For God will gather out His Saints from the Gentiles, and then comes desolation and destruction, and none can escape except the pure in heart who are gathered.”⁵³

This notion of gathering went back to early Puritan colonizing in New England.⁵⁴ John Winthrop believed that one reason for building a New Jerusalem in America was to escape the Lord’s judgments on the English church. Before leaving for New England, Winthrop reasoned that “all other churches of Europe beinge brought to desolation it cannot be but that the like Judgement is comminge upon us and who knoweth but that *god hath prepared this place for a refuge* for many whome he meaneth to save in the general destruction.”⁵⁵ Because the Puritans had failed to reform the English churches, America became their last hope for temporal salvation.⁵⁶

Joseph Smith inherited the broad outlines of this concept of a New Jerusalem from his Puritan forefathers. To the Puritans, the New Jerusalem was above all temporal and political.⁵⁷ They had not come to New England merely to save their souls but to establish the "visible" kingdom of God, a society where God's laws would be strictly obeyed. "This was New-Englands [sic] glory and design," wrote James Allen in 1679. "They came not hither to assert the propheticall or Priestly office of Christ so much, that were so fully owned in Old England, but [to assert] his kingly [office], to bear witness to those truths concerning his visible Kingdom."⁵⁸ This visible kingdom was, God willing, within human reach. In expressing a similar view, John Cotton disagreed with Roger Williams, who believed the New Jerusalem was closely associated with the advent of the Millennium. Cotton's postmillennialism caused him to expect a transformation of the world before Jesus' return. God would bring into being a "visible state of a new *Hierusalem* [sic], which shall flourish many years upon Earth, before the end of the world."⁵⁹ New England was established with this view in mind.⁶⁰

Some Puritans believed they had come to New England to join with God in "buyldinge his newe Jerusalem" and considered themselves privileged "to laye but one stone in the foundation of this new Syon."⁶¹ In a short time they announced, "We have created in the wilderness of the western world a commonwealth for Christ, a spiritual New Jerusalem."⁶² (This sense of mission would persist in the American psyche.⁶³) Although adversity would threaten this dream, as long as they were faithful to their covenants, God would protect them by punishing their enemies. But when they grew proud and worldly, the Lord sent plagues and Indians to humble them, at least according to certain leading preachers,⁶⁴ some of whom believed that God's attention to America indicated the new country's importance in the divine scheme.⁶⁵

Not everyone viewed the New World with such optimism. Increase Mather echoed the general Puritan disappointment when he said in 1702 that "God has not seen to take pleasure in the American world, so as to fix and settle his Glory therein."⁶⁶ Although the Puritan dream of establishing a New Jerusalem dimmed over time, some continued to hope.⁶⁷ In 1654, Edward Johnson reminded fellow Puritans that God's servants had promised that "this is the place where the Lord will create a new Heaven, and a new Earth." He also believed the colonists were in

“the service of our Lord Christ, to re-build the most glorious Edifice of Mount Sion in a Wilderness.”⁶⁸

In 1684, Samuel Sewall, jurist and commissioner of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England, rhetorically asked Cotton Mather “why the Heart of America may not be the seat of the New-Jerusalem.”⁶⁹ In his 1697 book *Phaenomena quaedam Apocalyptica*, Sewall again asked readers why America could not be “the place of New Jerusalem.” In his opinion, “America’s Name is to be seen fairly Recorded in Scripture” and America could well be the “seat of New Jerusalem.” Sewall believed the American Indians were descendants of the lost ten tribes of Israel who would be present to hear Jesus’ voice at the Second Coming.⁷⁰

Cotton Mather likewise discussed the American New Jerusalem. Mather “firmly believed that he had been sent on a special mission by God to lead his own and his father’s generations out of their years of confusion and doubt and into a new time that would see the coming of Christ and the establishment of the New Jerusalem in America.”⁷¹ Mather looked “westward” for “the last conflict with antichrist” and quoted Uriah Oakes: “That for the New-Jerusalem, there may/ A Seat be found in wide America.”⁷² Mather himself argued in 1710 that somewhere in “the brave Countries and Gardens which fill the American Hemesphere”—outside New England—“our Glorious Lord will have an Holy City in America; a City, the Street whereof will be Pure Gold.”⁷³

The Puritan dream of an American New Jerusalem persisted in the post-Puritan imagination. In 1785 a book titled *The Golden Age* told of its author being taken to a high mountain in the center of North America by an angel and watching the Jews gather to America, the “New Canaan,” to settle a “New Jerusalem.”⁷⁴ As late as 8 October 1829, the *Wayne Sentinel* reported that a Mr. McDonald, a gentleman about fifty years of age living near Bowling Green, Kentucky, had “founded a city, which he calls New Jerusalem.” (McDonald believed he and his followers would live forever as promised in the Bible.)

As soon as the Mormon church had come out of the wilderness of apostasy it headed for the American wilderness to establish the New Jerusalem. The location of the Mormon New Jerusalem was revealed to Joseph Smith in July 1831, only one year after the founding of the Church of Christ (D&C 57:1–3).⁷⁵ That August, Smith’s counselor Sidney Rigdon dedicated a temple

site at what was foreseen to be the center of the new city. And on 22 September 1832, Smith was instructed to begin building:

The city of New Jerusalem . . . shall be built, begining at the temple lot, which is appointed by the finger of the Lord, in the western boundaries of the State of Missouri. . . . The city New Jerusalem shall be built by the gathering of the saints, beginning at this place, even the place of the temple, which temple shall be reared in this generation. For verily this generation shall not all pass away until an house shall be built unto the Lord, and a cloud shall rest upon it, which cloud shall be even the glory of the Lord, which shall fill the house (D&C 84:2-5).

On 25 June 1833, Smith sent city plans and temple specifications to the leaders of the church in Missouri. According to Smith, the city of Zion would begin with a "plat . . . one mile square." "When this square is thus laid off and supplied," he continued, "lay off another in the same way, and so fill up the world in these last days."⁷⁶ Thus Mormonism attempted to recapture the Puritan dream of an ideal community—including theocratic government.⁷⁷ Unfortunately, before they could build their model city, they would be driven from Missouri in 1839.⁷⁸

The Book of Mormon describes an American-based New Jerusalem as well as a holy city descending out of heaven. The Book of Mormon prophet Ether speaks of both "a New Jersusalem [that] should be built up upon this land [of America]" and "the New Jerusalem, which should come down out of heaven" (13:3, 6). The heavenly New Jerusalem would come at a time when "there shall be a new heaven and a new earth" (see 13:9-12).

In December 1830 Joseph Smith received a revelation, known in part as the "Prophecy of Enoch," which told of the Old Testament City of Enoch being taken into heaven:

So great was the faith of Enoch that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them; and he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled; . . . and the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness; and all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch. . . . And the Lord called his people ZION, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them. And Enoch . . . built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even ZION. . . . [And] the Lord said unto Enoch: Zion have I blessed, but the residue of the people have I cursed. And it came to pass that the Lord showed unto Enoch all the inhabitants of the earth; and he

beheld, and lo, Zion, in process of time, was taken up into heaven (Moses 7:13, 18–21).

An extract of this revelation was published in *The Evening and the Morning Star* in August 1832. In this important portion of the revelation God tells Enoch about the establishment of a latter-day Zion and the eventual union of the two Zions.

And truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem. . . . Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there, and . . . there shall be mine abode, . . . and for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest (Moses 7:60–64).

In March 1832, the new Mormon settlement in Missouri was referred to in a revelation symbolically as “the city of Enoch” and Joseph Smith was called “Enoch” (D&C 78:1, 4). The revelation promised that the church would be lifted up “in a cloud” to meet Jesus (vv. 20–21). Those who did not gather to Zion to be caught up at Jesus’ return would be destroyed (D&C 76:99–106; 88:92–98). Thus Paul’s words to the Thessalonians—that those alive at Christ’s return “shall be caught up . . . in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thes. 4:17)—applied to the church as a group rather than to individuals. In May 1833, *The Evening and the Morning Star* published the words to the Mormon hymn “Songs of Zion,” which elaborated on the expected levitation of the church: “Behold the church, it soars on high,/ To meet the saints amid the sky;/ To hail the King in clouds of fire:/ And strike and tune th’ immortal lyre.”⁷⁹

The doctrine of “translation”—the changing from a mortal state to an immortal state without necessarily dying first—figures prominently in early Mormon thinking. Early in their work on the Book of Mormon, Smith and Cowdery came to a passage which tried to explain the disappearance of Alma the Younger in language which left the matter undecided as to whether “he was taken up by the Spirit, or buried by the hand of the Lord, even as Moses” (Al. 45:18–19; cf. 3 Ne. 1:2, 2:9). Also about this time (April 1829) Smith and Cowdery argued over a disputed passage in the New Testament about the apostle John living until Jesus returned (Jn. 21:20–24).⁸⁰ When Smith asked God about this, a

revelation declared that John had indeed been translated and was ministering on earth until Jesus' return (D&C 7). The following month Smith came to a portion of the plates which described the translation of three of the Nephite disciples and explained in detail the nature of translated beings (3 Ne. 28).

In December 1830, while revising the Bible, Smith learned that not only had Enoch's city been taken to heaven but afterwards "the Holy Ghost fell on many, and they were caught up by the powers of heaven into Zion" (Moses 7:27). Early the next year Smith added to the Genesis account regarding Melchizedek that the priest of Salem "was ordained an high priest after the order of the covenant which God made with Enoch. . . . And men having this faith, coming up unto this order of God, were translated and taken up into heaven." Melchizedek preached peace to his people, who "wrought righteousness, and obtained heaven, and sought for the city of Enoch which God had before taken, separating it from the earth, having reserved it unto the latter days, or the end of the world; and hath said, and sworn with an oath, that the heavens and the earth should come together" (Gen. 14:27, 32, 34-35, "Inspired Version").

Melchizedek's fate is alluded to in the Book of Mormon. Melchizedek, Alma explains, was "ordained unto the high priesthood of the holy order of God, to teach his commandments unto the children of men, that they also might enter into his rest . . . and there were many, exceeding great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God" (Al. 13:6, 12). Alma further explains that Melchizedek and other ancient high priests were "ordained after the order of his [God's] Son, in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption" (13:2). Early Mormons would thus have connected the doctrine of the high priesthood with translation. William W. Phelps, for example, said "Enoch . . . preached the resurrection, and confirmed the doctrine by being translated, with Zion, to the bosom of God."⁸¹

According to a February 1832 revelation, those who would ultimately be saved in the highest heavenly kingdom were those "priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek. . . . These are they whom he shall bring with him, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven. . . . These are they who are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all. These are they who have come to an

innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn" (D&C 76:57, 63, 66–67).⁸²

Early Mormon historian John Whitmer recorded that there was a tradition among some Mormons "that those who obeyed the covenant in the last days, would never die; but by experience, they have learned to the contrary."⁸³ On 5 April 1831 the *Painesville Telegraph* reported that one Mormon refused to call a physician because he believed he would never die. On 18 April 1832, the *Wayne Sentinel* described the beliefs of Mormons in Mendon, New York, home of recent converts Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball. "The preacher says he shall never die, but be translated, after the manner of Enoch, and that in eighteen months Mormonism will be the prevailing religion; and that in five years, the wicked are to be swept from the face of the earth."

Many early Mormon blessings reveal this literal belief in the doctrine of translation. "President Z[ebedee]. Coltrin ordained me as a member of the first Seventy & Pronounced great blessings upon my head by the Spirit of Prophecy & Revelation," Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal on 3 January 1837. Among other things, the blessing promised that "I should then return & stand upon Mount Zion in the flesh even in Jackson County Missouri at the Cumming of Christ & that I should be caught up to meet him in the Clouds of heaven for he said this was the word of God unto me & Also that I should visit COLUB & Preach to the spirits in Prison."⁸⁴ On 7 December 1836, William Huntington blessed his thirteen-year-old son, Oliver: "thou shalt have power with God even to translate thyself to Heaven, & preach to the inhabitants of the moon or planets, if it shall be expedient."⁸⁵ The following week, Lorenzo Snow received a blessing from Joseph Smith, Sr., which promised "thou shalt have power to translate thyself from one planet to another, power to go to the moon if thou shalt desire it, power to preach to the spirits in prison. Power like Enoch to translate thyself to heaven."⁸⁶ Caroline Barnes Crosby copied into her journal a blessing her husband, Jonathan Crosby, received on 21 February 1836 from Joseph Smith, Sr.:

Thou shalt . . . by the power of God, Be caught up to the third heavens, and behold unspeakable things, whether in the body or out. Thou shalt see thy Redeemer in the flesh, and know that He lives. Angels shall minister unto thee, and protect thee from thine enemies, so that none shall be able to take thy life. And when thy mission is full here, thou shalt visit other worlds, and remain a Priest in Eternity. Thou shalt

stand upon the earth 'till the Redeemer comes, See the end of this generation, and when the heavens rend, thou shalt rise and meet thy God in the air.⁸⁷

The doctrine of translation was also a part of the beliefs of Asa Wild. Wild admonished readers to persevere until "being made fully 'meet for the inheritance of the saints in light,' and being so filled with God and glory that earth can no longer contain you, like Enoch and Elijah, you are translated to a brighter world."⁸⁸ The group which founded the New Jerusalem in Kentucky also believed they would "live forever as promised in the Bible."⁸⁹

Mormons thought that contemporary Indian policy validated their belief that they were viewing the last events of world history. The 1830 Indian Removal Act, which relocated the Indian nations just a few miles west of the revealed site of the New Jerusalem, was seen as providential since "Lamanites" were to be the primary occupants of the New Jerusalem (3 Ne. 21:24).⁹⁰ For example, Parley P. Pratt wrote in 1837 that "the government of the United States has been engaged, for upwards of nine years, in gathering the remnant of Joseph to the very place they will finally build a New Jerusalem, a city of Zion, with the assistance of the Gentiles, who will gather them from all the face of the land: and this gathering is clearly predicted in the Book of Mormon, and other revelations, and the place before appointed, and the time set for its fulfillment."⁹¹ This event combined with signs that Armageddon was about to sweep through the United States must have greatly intensified the Saints' millenarian expectations.

However, such optimism was premature. In April 1833 about three hundred citizens met in Independence to plan the removal or destruction of their Mormon neighbors. On 20 July 1833 a mob destroyed the church's printing office in Independence. By 7 November approximately 1,200 Mormon residents had been driven from Jackson County, most of whom found temporary refuge in nearby Clay County.⁹² Instead of a place of refuge for the Saints, Zion had become a place of danger, a place from which the Saints had to flee.

But as late as 2 August 1833 Smith dictated a revelation which directed the Saints to build the temple in Zion: "It is my will that a house should be built unto me in the land of Zion, like unto the pattern which I have given you. Yea, let it be built speedily, by the tithing of my people. Behold, this is the tithing and the sacrifice which I, the Lord, require at their hands, that there may

be a house built unto me for the salvation of Zion" (D&C 97:10–12). Shortly thereafter, Smith received news of the growing antagonism against the church in Missouri.⁹³ On 6 August, four days after the above revelation, Smith dictated another revelation, advising the Saints to obey the law, "waiting patiently on the Lord . . . [For] all things wherewith you have been afflicted shall work together for your good, and to my name's glory, saith the Lord; . . . and I will try you and prove you herewith" (D&C 98:2, 3, 12). In October God promised, "Zion shall be redeemed, although she is chastened for a little season" (D&C 100:13).

On 10 December 1833, Smith wrote to his brethren in Zion, "I know that Zion, in the own due time of the Lord will be redeemed, but how many will be the days of her purification, tribulation and affliction, the Lord has kept from my eyes; and when I enquire concerning this subject the voice of the Lord is, Be still, and know that I am God!" In the same letter, Smith advised those in Missouri to "retain your lands even unto the uttermost, and seeking ev[e]ry lawful means to obtain redress of your enemies &c &c and pray to God day and night to return you in peace and in safety to the Lands of your inheritance." What Smith meant by "uttermost" was explained by his comment that "it is better that you should die in the ey[e]s of God, then that you should give up the Land of Zion."⁹⁴

On 16 December, Smith dictated a revelation which explained that the Saints were afflicted in Missouri "in consequence of their transgressions" (D&C 101:2). The revelation instructed the Saints in Zion to make their redresses before the law: "let them importune at the feet of the judge; and if he heed them not, let them importune at the feet of the governor; and if the governor heed them not, let them importune at the feet of the president; and if the president heed them not, then will the Lord arise and come forth out of his hiding place, and in his fury vex the nation" (101:86–89). According to Parley P. Pratt, "the revelation was printed at the time, and a copy of it sent to the Governor of Missouri, and another to President Jackson."⁹⁵

When peaceful attempts to redeem Zion failed, Smith began to organize a more aggressive effort. A revelation given on 24 February 1834 declared "the redemption of Zion must needs come by power. . . . Let no man be afraid to lay down his life for my sake" (D&C 103:15, 27). "I have decreed," God states, "that your brethren which have been scattered shall return to the lands of their inheritances, and shall build up the waste places of Zion"

(103:11). In a 10 April 1834 letter to John F. Boynton, Oliver Cowdery explained the importance of redeeming Zion: "You will undoubtedly see that it is of but little consequence to proclaim the everlasting gospel to men, and warn them to flee to Zion for refuge, when there is no Zion, but that which is in possession of the wicked. So, Zion must be redeemed, and then the saints can have a place to flee to for safety."⁹⁶

On 5 May 1834, Smith left Kirtland, Ohio, with a paramilitary group called "Zion's Camp" and headed for Zion "for the purpose of carrying some supplies to the afflicted and persecuted Saints in Missouri, and to reinforce and strengthen them; and, if possible, to influence the Governor of the State to call out sufficient additional force to cooperate in restoring them to their rights."⁹⁷ Gathering recruits along the way, Smith arrived in Missouri with some 205 armed men. However, the camp was suffering a cholera epidemic.⁹⁸ On 22 June Smith received a revelation at their Fishing River encampment which explained that "were it not for the transgressions of my people, . . . they might have been redeemed even now. . . . Therefore, in consequence of the transgressions of my people, it is expedient in me that mine elders should wait for a little season for the redemption of Zion" (D&C 105:2, 9). With that pronouncement, Smith discharged the members of Zion's Camp on 30 June.⁹⁹

Smith soon announced that 11 September 1836 was "the appointed time for the redemption of Zion."¹⁰⁰ In October 1835, Smith indicated to bishops Edward Partridge and Newel K. Whitney that he was still committed to the predicted date for the return to Independence.¹⁰¹ The proceedings at the dedication of the Kirtland temple in March 1836 were replete with references to the redemption of Zion. The endowment of spiritual power was seen as a necessary prerequisite to that event.¹⁰² The church officers who had formerly presided over the Zion church retained their titles and were thus generally considered to be the Zion church in exile ready to take their former positions at the appointed time.¹⁰³

Smith's prediction of vindication was taken seriously by his followers. Traveler Edmund Flagg, while in the "far west" during the summer of 1836, met a company of Mormons on their way to Zion who explained that they were on their way to "Mount Zion" and that "the Saviour was about to descend in Jackson county, Missouri; the millennium was dawning, and that all who

were not baptized . . . and forthwith repaired to Mount Zion. . . would assuredly be cut off, and that without remedy.”¹⁰⁴

During a special conference of the church on 2 April 1836, Smith and Cowdery were appointed by a committee to raise as much money as they could “for a season” and to send it to the leaders in Zion to purchase land.¹⁰⁵ Even before the failure of Zion’s Camp, church leaders in Kirtland had considered buying out their opponents.¹⁰⁶ Just before the appointed time, Smith and others made a trip to Salem, Massachusetts, seeking “treasure . . . for the benefit of Zion” (D&C 111:2).¹⁰⁷ However, when Smith did not obtain the treasure he sought, he “returned to Kirtland, sometime in the month of September.”¹⁰⁸

On 5 February 1838 David Whitmer and others were tried at Far West, Missouri, for selling their Zion lands, which was considered a “denial of the faith.” The following year, on 9 March, Smith finally advised Mormons to “sell all the land in Jackson, and all other lands in the State [of Missouri]”—thus cooling any ideas that Zion was to be redeemed soon.¹⁰⁹

Disappointment and impatience are discernible in Parley P. Pratt’s 4 December 1841 letter to Joseph Smith from Manchester, England. Seeking “a word of encouragement,” Pratt apologetically requests answers from Smith to the following:

When Will The “*purchased possession*” be Redeemed and the temple and city commence in Jackson Co. Mo.[?] . . . When Will the ungodly, lying, Gentiles begin to loose their Power and cease to Rule; and We who have now spent half our lives for them, be privaledged to turn from the Gentiles and go in full power to the Remnants of Joseph [Indians] and Israel?¹¹⁰

In the wake of such apparent failure, Smith’s prophetic powers were openly challenged. When the camp returned to Kirtland, newspaper editor E. D. Howe reported, “there was a constant uproar among the brethren, for three or four weeks, which only terminated in a sham trial of the Prophet.”¹¹¹ Some “were doubting the truth of the book of mormon, others denying the faith,” early Mormon historian John Whitmer recorded.¹¹² On 16 August 1834, Smith wrote to his brethren in Missouri that Sylvester Smith and others “stirred up a great difficulty in the Church against me. Accordingly I was met in the face and eyes, as soon as I had got home, with a catalogue of charges . . . the cry was Tyrant—Pope—King—Usurper—Abuser of men—Angel—False Prophet—Prophesying lies in the name of the Lord—Taking consecrated

monies—and every other lie to fill up and complete the catalogue.”¹¹³

The failure of Zion’s Camp made it all the more imperative for Smith to complete the transition from charismatic source of authority to one more stable and enduring. Perhaps the initial delay in organizing the church’s government and hierarchy related to millennial expectations, but now Smith moved quickly to further institutionalize authority. Even before he left Missouri, Smith organized a high council for Zion just as he had done in Kirtland. In February 1835 he organized the Quorum of Twelve Apostles and the First Quorum of Seventy. Zion’s Camp may not have been a complete failure since virtually all the leaders chosen for these two hierarchical bodies were previously members of the camp who had thus been tested and proven loyal. The organization of these two quorums also provided the leadership for the increased missionary effort which Mormons would soon launch.

The month following Smith’s return from Zion’s Camp, he assisted Cowdery in preparing “a full history of the rise of the church of the Latter Day Saints,” which included the first published version of the angelic ordination of Smith and Cowdery to “the holy priesthood.”¹¹⁴ Smith’s efforts to publish his revelations were finally realized in September 1835 when the *Doctrine and Covenants* went on sale.

After the failure to establish Zion, church leaders began to deemphasize the nearness of Jesus’ return and the destruction of the wicked. An important change in one of the early revelations shows the shift in the early Mormon position regarding the nearness of the Millennium. Book of Commandments 4:6, given in March 1829, warned “this generation” that “the sword of justice hangeth over their heads, and if they persist in the hardness of their hearts, the time cometh that it must fall upon them.”¹¹⁵ However, by the time the revelation was being prepared for the 1835 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, Mormon millennialism had cooled and the idea that the end was near and the wicked would be destroyed no longer seemed tenable. Consequently, the words were replaced with something less decisive: “For a desolating scourge shall go forth among the inhabitants of the earth, and shall continue to be poured out from time to time, if they repent not, until the earth is empty, and the inhabitants thereof are consumed away and utterly destroyed by the brightness of my coming” (D&C 5:19).

Also about this time Smith made statements which otherwise placed Jesus' return at a more comfortable distance. On 14 February 1835, during a meeting at which the twelve apostles were chosen and ordained, Smith himself declared that Zion would yet be redeemed and that "the coming of the Lord . . . was nigh—even fifty-six years should wind up the scene."¹¹⁶ On another occasion Smith had said he was once praying "very earnestly to know the time of the coming of the Son of Man," when he heard a voice declaring: "Joseph, my son, if thou livest until thou art eighty-five years old, thou shalt see the face of the Son of Man" (D&C 130:14–15). Both statements point to the year 1891, which became a significant year for some first generation Mormons.¹¹⁷ However, Smith was unsure "whether this coming referred to the beginning of the millennium or to some previous appearing, or whether I should die and thus see his face." He knew that "the coming of the Son of Man will not be any sooner than that time" (D&C 130:16–17).¹¹⁸

Still, Smith had not placed the coming much farther in the future. When he organized the Quorum of Twelve Apostles in 1835, he promised that several of them would live until Christ came.¹¹⁹ "Were I going to prophesy," Smith said in April 1843, "I would say the end would not come in 1844, 5, or 6, or in forty years. There are those of the rising generation who shall not taste of death till Christ comes."¹²⁰ The 3 January 1836 "Zion Blessing" of Lorenzo Barnes (1812–42) given by Joseph Smith, Jr., Hyrum Smith, and Sidney Rigdon promised: "Thou shalt have length of days & Thy years shall be many. . . . Thou shalt remane until The comeing of The Son of man [in] The clowds of heaven ya Thou shalt See The winding up seen of all Things & stand with The hundred forty & four Thousand on Mount Zion."¹²¹

When William Miller calculated the date of Jesus' return as 1843 or 1844, Smith emphatically denounced the date, declaring in March 1844 that "Christ will not come this year, as Father Miller has prophesied. . . . I also prophesy, in the name of the Lord, that Christ will not come in forty years."¹²²

On 19 January 1841, Joseph Smith received a revelation in the new Mormon settlement of Nauvoo, Illinois, which rescinded the "commandment . . . to build up a city and a house unto my name, in Jackson county, Missouri" (D&C 124:49, 51).¹²³ However, many faithful Mormons continued to believe in the prophecy that the temple "shall be reared in this generation" and that

"this generation shall not all pass away until an house shall be built unto the Lord."

Mormon leader George Q. Cannon declared in 1864 that "the day is near when a Temple shall be reared in the Center Stake of Zion, and the Lord has said his glory shall rest on that House in this generation in which the revelation was given, which is upwards of thirty years ago."¹²⁴ Mormon apostle Orson Pratt said in 1870 that Mormons in Utah still had "confidence in returning to Jackson County and the building of a great central city. . . . There are many of the old stock, . . . still living, whose faith in returning to Jackson county, . . . is as firm and fixed as the throne of the Almighty."¹²⁵ On 23 August 1862, Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal that Brigham Young said the Mormons "have to go back to Jackson county which [he] Expect[s] will be in 7 years."¹²⁶ Mormon millennial expectations were reignited in the period of national calamity surrounding the Civil War.¹²⁷

New adjustments were thus demanded by the final decades of the nineteenth century, but fundamental transformations had already occurred in Smith's lifetime.¹²⁸ A shift in the concept of gathering to Zion was already discernible in a speech Smith gave in July 1839:

There will be here & there a stake [of Zion] &c. For the gathering of the Saints[.] Some may have cried peace, but the Saints & the world will have little peace from henceforth. Let this not hinder us from going to the Stakes, for God has told us to flee not dallying, or we shall be scattered, one here, another there. . . . We ought to have the building up of Zion as our greatest object.—when wars come we shall have to flee to Zion, the cry is to make haste. . . . The time is soon coming when no man will have any peace but in Zion & her Stakes.¹²⁹

The shift in the millenarian emphasis of early Mormonism parallels shifts in concepts of religious authority and church government already discussed. "The inevitable fate of all millenarian movements is failure and collapse," observes historian John G. Gager. "They either—and the majority would certainly fall into this class—disintegrate and disappear when their millennial expectations remain unfulfilled or—and here I think of both Christianity and Mormonism—they cease to be millenarian in the strict sense." Gager argues that "those movements which survive the trauma of non-fulfillment usually do so in rather predictable ways"

and lists four approaches to adjustment which can apply to Mormonism: (1) "they generate a series of rational explanations for the non-arrival of the millennium"; (2) "they reach out and seek to persuade others of the truth of their religion"; (3) "they redirect their energies away from preparing for the End and toward the development of institutional structures"; and (4) "as an essential part of this reorientation, they either forget or suppress the memory of their millenarian origins, for it is precisely in the transformation of millennial energies into other forms of action that we can locate the key to survival and success, on the one hand, or disintegration and collapse on the other."¹³⁰

Primitivists generally believed that Jesus would return at the end of the Millennium, while Seekers and Mormons believed he would initiate the Millennium, and were thus easily spun into a frenzy by the whirl of millennial expectations in nineteenth-century America. Both post-Revolutionary Seekers and Mormons set out to warn the world of Jesus' imminent advent and the destruction of the wicked. When the rhetoric of apocalypse was tempered by delay and disappointment, Mormonism was purged of another trace of its charismatic origins.

— NOTES —

1. B. S. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-Century English Millenarianism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), 13-22; Christopher Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 149; Hugh R. Trevor-Roper, *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change* (London: McMillan, 1967), 237-93; Charles Webster, *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform, 1626-1660* (London: Duckworth Press, 1975).

2. Thomas Brightman, *A Revelation of the Apocalypse*, in *The Works of That Famous, Reverend, and Learned Divine. Mr. Tho: Brightman* (London, 1644), 162, 380-82, 607, 701, 824. Brightman has been characterized as postmillennialist by Peter Toon, "The Latter-Day Glory," in *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology, 1600 to 1660*, ed. Peter Toon (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1970), 31. Postmillennialists believed that Jesus Christ would come after the Millennium began, Premillennialists that he would usher in the Millennium.

3. Samuel Gatchel, *The Signs of the Times: or Some Expositions and Remarks on Sundry Texts of Scripture, Relative to the Remarkable Phenomenon, or Dark-Day, Which Appeared in New-England on the Nineteenth of May, 1780: by Which It Appears That New England Is the Place that the Prophet Joel Calls Zion and Jerusalem* (Danvers, MA, 1781), 15.

4. Joseph Priestley, *The Present State of Europe Compared with the Antient Prophecies* (London, 1794), 20; Timothy Dwight, *The Duty of Americans, at the Present Crisis, Illustrated in a Discourse, Preached on the Fourth of July, 1798 at the Request of the Citizens of New Haven* (New Haven, 1798), 31.
5. See Harris E. Starr, "David Austin," in Allen Johnson, Dumas Malone, and Harris E. Starr, eds., *Dictionary of American Biography*, 21 vols. (New York, 1928-44), 1:432.
6. Jedidiah Morse, *Signs of the Times* (Charlestown, MA, 1810), 22, 34.
7. Ethan Smith, *A Dissertation on the Prophecies* (Charlestown, MA, 1811), 104.
8. Peter Cartwright, *Autobiography* (New York, 1856), 51-52.
9. See David M. Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont, 1791-1850* (New York, 1939), 69-70, 109-10, 156, 238; Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca, 1950), 165, 224.
10. See James H. Moorhead, "Between Progress and Apocalypse: A Reassessment of Millennialism in American Religious Thought, 1800-1880," *Journal of American History* 71 (Dec. 1984): 524-42.
11. Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (1835), in Edwin Scott Gaustad, *A Religious History of America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 151.
12. Mark Hopkins, *Essay and Discourses* (1847), 442-43.
13. "The National Crisis," *Christian Review* 26 (July 1861): 492.
14. In Royal Humbert, *A Compend of Alexander Campbell's Theology* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1961), 269. On Alexander Campbell's postmillennialism, see Robert Frederick West, *Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 185-86, 202. However, after 1860, Campbell's millennialism cooled. West, 212-15.
15. Roger Williams, *George Fox Digg'd Out of His Burrowes* (Boston, 1676), 3, 44, 95.
16. Roger Williams, *Mr. Cottons Letter Lately Printed, Examined and Answered* (London, 1644), "To the Impartial Reeder," [2].
17. Roger Williams, *Hireling Ministry None of Christs* (London, 1652), 20-21.
18. *Ibid.*, 13; see also 2, 5, 14, 21.
19. *Ibid.*, 2, 21.
20. *Ibid.*, 5; see also 2, 21. Cf. John Fox, *Fox's Book of Martyrs: A History of the Lives, Sufferings and Triumphant Deaths of the Early Christian and the Protestant Martyrs*, ed. William Byron Forbush (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967).
21. Williams, *Hireling Ministry*, 21.
22. *Ibid.*, 13-14.
23. *Wayne Sentinel*, 22 Oct. 1823.
24. [Asa Wild], *A Short Sketch of the Religious Experience, and Spiritual Travels of Asa Wild, of Amsterdam, N. Y. Written by himself by Divine Command, and the most infallible Inspiration* (Amsterdam, NY: printed for the author by D. Wells, 1824), 78-79.
25. *Ibid.*, 78.
26. *Wayne Sentinel*, 22 Oct. 1823.

27. Scott H. Faulring, *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), 6.

28. In his 1832 history, Smith said the angel "revealed unto me many things concerning the inhabitants of the earth which since have been revealed in commandments and revelations" (Faulring, *American Prophet's Record*, 6). However, this account was expanded in the 1838 account, where Smith said that the angel quoted from Mal. chaps. 3 and 4, Isa. chap. 11, and Acts 3:22-23 (see Joseph Smith, Jr., et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev., 7 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1964], 1:12-13, hereafter HC; cf. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984], 203-204.

29. See Gordon Irving, "The Mormons and the Bible in the 1830s," *Brigham Young University Studies* 13 (Summer 1973): 476-78.

30. *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (June 1834): 163.

31. See Moorhead, "Between Progress and Apocalypse," 525, 537.

32. *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (May 1834): 153; *ibid.*, 2 (April 1834): 145.

33. For a treatment of the apocalyptic nature of *The Evening and the Morning Star*, see Stephen J. Stein, "Signs of the Times: The Theological Foundations of Early Mormon Apocalyptic," *Sunstone* 8 (Jan.-April 1983): 59-65.

34. Parley P. Pratt, *A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People* (New York, 1837), 156.

35. *Ibid.*, 135.

36. For early Mormon beliefs about the nearness of the advent and the effects of its delay, see Keith D. Norman, "How Long, O Lord? The Delay of the Parousia in Mormonism," *Sunstone* 8 (Jan.-April 1983): 49-58.

37. *Painesville Telegraph* 2 (16 Nov. 1830).

38. *Ohio Star* 1 (9 Dec. 1830).

39. *Painesville Telegraph* 2 (15 March 1831).

40. E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled [sic]: or, A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, from Its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, OH: E. D. Howe, 1834), 14.

41. Levi Hancock, "Levi Hancock Journal," 48, typewritten copy, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University Library, Provo, Utah.

42. Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 273-74, 672. In quoting Jessee's transcription, I have excluded his editorial marks, corrected the punctuation of the original in one instance, and added emphasis; cf. HC 1:315-16. The last paragraph of Smith's letter, which included the words here quoted, was published in the *American Revivalist*, and *Rochester Observer* on 2 Feb. 1833. In a subsequent letter, dated 12 Feb. 1833, Smith complained that his previous letter had not been printed in its entirety and mentioned that it had been written "by the commandment of God" (Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 275). This is similar to the written warnings of Seekers Asa Wild and Erastus Hanchett published in the *Wayne Sentinel* on 22 Oct. 1823 and 23 Feb. 1825.

43. When the *Albany Express* reported on 17 August 1848 that a "destructive fire" had occurred in that city, Mormon apostle Orson Pratt reprinted in the *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* the article along with the 1832 prophecy (*Millennial Star* 10 [15 Sept. 1848]: 286-87).

44. From the *Dollar Weekly Bostonian* as reprinted in the *Times and Seasons* 3 (16 May 1842): 798; emphasis added.

45. *Painesville Telegraph*, 21 Dec. 1832.

46. On the historical context of Smith's prophecy, see Richard P. Howard, "Christmas Day, 1832: Joseph Smith Responds to the Nullification Crisis," *Saints' Herald* 116 (May 1969): 54; Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith: A Historical and Biographical Commentary of the Doctrine and Covenants* (Provo, UT: Seventy's Mission Bookstore, 1981), 180.

47. The Prophecy on War was not included in the Doctrine and Covenants until the 1876 edition.

48. While some have asserted that the prophecy was fulfilled in the Civil War, according to Richard P. Howard, "a careful, *contextual* study" of the entire prophecy as well as the full text of the Saxton letter "shows that neither on December 25, 1832, nor on January 4, 1833, was Joseph Smith merely predicting a civil war. These documents disclose his view that the soon expected division of the Union would be a portent of the culmination of world history in divine judgment." See Howard, "Christmas Day, 1832," 54.

49. The prospectus appeared in the *Times and Seasons*, which was serially publishing Joseph Smith's history, but was subsequently removed when Smith's history was re-edited by B. H. Roberts. See *Times and Seasons* 5 (15 Aug. 1844): 610.

50. *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (April 1834): 145.

51. *Times and Seasons* 3 (1 March 1842): 710.

52. On the early Mormon concept of Zionism, see Steven L. Olsen, "Zion: The Structure of a Theological Revolution," *Sunstone* 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1981): 21-26.

53. HC 2:52.

54. See William Mulder, "Mormonism's 'Gathering': An American Doctrine With a Difference," *Church History* 23 (Sept. 1954): 248-64. "Descendants of Puritans and Patriots should have recognized the doctrine [of gathering the elect]," Mulder says (248; see also 257).

55. Allyn Bailey Forbes and Stewart Mitchell, eds., *The Winthrop Papers*, 5 vols. (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1929-47), 2:91, 111, emphasis added.

56. Winthrop's plea for a pure church in order to escape divine destruction was an established Puritan goal. "Either must we have a right ministry of God, and a right government of his church, according to the scriptures set up (both of which we lack) or else there can be no right religion, nor yet for contempt thereof God's plagues be from us any while deferred." [Thomas Wilcox and John Field], *An Admonition to Parliament* [1572], in W. H. Frere and C. B. Douglas, *Puritan Manifestoes* (London, 1907), 6.

57. The concept of establishing the political kingdom of God on earth was also held by the sixteenth-century Anabaptists of Europe. Though more radical and militant than the Puritans of New England, these Anabaptists also attempted to set up the New Jerusalem on the continent in Munster and to establish their prophets as theocratic rulers. See Norman Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 283-306.

58. James Allen, *New England's Choicest Blessing* (Boston, 1679), 11.

59. John Cotton, *Bloudy Tenent, Washed, and Made White in the Bloud of the Lambe* (London, 1647), 43.

60. See Winthrop's sermon, "A Modell of Christian Charity," in *Winthrop Papers*, 2:282-95. See also 2:176, 295.

61. See Edward Howes to John Winthrop, 9 Nov. 1631, *Winthrop Papers*, 3:54; and Arthur Tyndal to John Winthrop, 10 Nov. 1629, *Ibid.*, 2:166. On the Puritan concept of an American New Jerusalem, see Alan Heimert, "Puritanism, the Wilderness, and the Frontier," *New England Quarterly* 26 (Sept. 1953): 361-62. For a comparison of Puritan and Mormon concepts of the New Jerusalem, see Gustav H. Blanke and Karen Lynn, "'God's Base of Operations': Mormon Variations on the American Sense of Mission," *Brigham Young University Studies* 20 (Fall 1979): 83-92.

62. In *Cambridge History of American Literature* (New York, 1917), 1:vi.

63. For a discussion of early Americans' interpretation of their own history, see, among others, Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); Russel B. Nye, *This Almost Chosen People: Essays in the History of American Ideas* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1966), esp. chap. 4.

64. For the Puritan's providential view of history, see Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), esp. chap. 11.

65. Jonathan Edwards, "Some Thoughts on the Revival of Religion in New England in 1740," in *Works* (New York, 1830): 4:132; 3:316, 376; "An Humble Attempt . . . for the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom on Earth Pursuant to Scripture-Promises and Prophecies Concerning the Last Time" (Boston, 1747), 5, 169.

66. Increase Mather, *Ichabod* (Boston, 1702), 64-65.

67. See Edward R. Lambert, *History of the Colony of New Haven* (New Haven, 1838), 50.

68. Edward Johnson, *Wonder-working Providence of Sion's Savior . . .* (London, 1654), 25, 52.

69. In *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Series 5, vol. 1 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1878), 58. See also Ola Elizabeth Winslow, *Samuel Sewall of Boston* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1964), 152-56.

70. Samuel Sewall, *Phaenomena quaedam Apocalyptica . . .* (Boston, 1697): 2, 42, 36.

71. Emary Elliot, *Power and the Pulpit in Puritan New England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 189.

72. Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, 2 vols. (Hartford, 1820), 1:302, 2:97.

73. Cotton Mather, *Theopholis Americana* (Boston, 1710), 43-44.

74. Celadon [pseud.], *The Golden Age* (n.p., 1785), esp. 12-14.

75. Joseph Smith was told in September 1830, five months after the organization of the church, that the New Jerusalem would be built "on the borders by the Lamanites" (D&C 28:9). Missionaries were sent to Indian tribes in New York, Ohio, Missouri, and Kansas. That December, Smith was told that the Old Testament prophet Enoch had foreseen the New

Jerusalem in the New World (Moses 7:62). This New Jerusalem was mentioned in at least two revelations in early 1831 before the location of the city was decided on. See D&C 42:34–36, 62; 45:64–69, 71.

76. HC 1:358. See Richard H Jackson, "The Mormon Village: Genesis and Antecedents of the City of Zion Plan," *Brigham Young University Studies* 17 (Winter 1977): 223–40, where he concludes that "in general . . . the grid pattern layout and the reasons given for establishing the city [of Zion] in its prescribed form vary but little from those used elsewhere in the trans-Appalachian region" (224).

77. This aspect of the Book of Mormon has been seen by others. See, for example, Marvin S. Hill, "Quest for Refuge: An Hypothesis as to the Social Origins and Nature of the Mormon Political Kingdom," *Journal of Mormon History* 2 (1975): 12; and Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 34–35.

78. On Mormon anti-pluralism as a contributing factor of Mormon-Gentile conflict, see Hill, "Role of Christian Primitivism." On the expulsion of the Mormons from Missouri, see Warren A. Jennings, "Zion is Fled: The Expulsion of the Mormons from Jackson County, Missouri," Ph.D., diss., University of Florida, 1962; and Stephen C. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1987).

79. *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (May 1833): [96].

80. HC 1:35–36.

81. *The Evening and the Morning Star*, Dec. 1832, [49].

82. A September 1832 revelation explained that the high priesthood included the power to "behold the face of God" and to "enter into his rest, . . . which rest is the fulness of his glory" (D&C 84:23, 24, 29). Those who are faithful to "the oath and covenant" of the high priesthood shall be "sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies" (84:33, 39). Joseph Smith added in March 1835 that the Melchizedek Priesthood (which by that time included elders) gave the recipient "the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant" (D&C 107:19). Speaking about the Melchizedek Priesthood in 1840, Smith noted that "the doctrine of translation is a power which belongs to this Priesthood." HC 4:209.

83. F. Mark McKiernan and Roger D. Launius, eds., *An Early Latter Day Saint History: The Book of John Whitmer, Kept by Commandment* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1980), 45.

84. Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 9 vols. (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983–84), 1:119.

85. Patriarchal Blessings Book, 9:294–95, archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; hereafter LDS church archives.

86. Lorenzo Snow Papers, 1836–44, LDS church archives.

87. Caroline Barnes Crosby Journal, Utah Historical Society, Salt Lake City.

88. Wild, *Short Sketch*, 96.

89. *Wayne Sentinel*, 8 Oct. 1823. Cf. Jn. 8:51.

90. See, for example, *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (Sept. 1832): [32]; 1 (Dec. 1832): [54]; and 1 (Jan. 1833): [62]; HC 2:358–62.

91. Pratt, *Voice of Warning*, 185–86.

92. On the Missouri persecutions, see James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976), 81–93; LeSueur, *1838 Mormon War*.

93. See Cook, *Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 201, and Mario DePillis, “The Development of Mormon Communitarianism, 1826–1846,” Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1960, 227.

94. Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 308, 310. For convenience, I have not followed Jessee’s editorial style.

95. *Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star* 1 (July 1840): 65.

96. Oliver Cowdery to John F. Boynton, 10 April 1834, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

97. Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt, Jr. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1968), 114.

98. On the cholera epidemic, see Robert T. Divett, “His Chastening Rod: Cholera Epidemics and the Mormons,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 12 (Fall 1979): 10–12. On the need for additional military support, see Peter Crawley and Richard L. Anderson, “The Political and Social Realities of Zion’s Camp,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 14 (Summer 1974): 406–20.

99. For a general history of Zion’s Camp, see Roger D. Launius, *Zion’s Camp: Expedition to Missouri, 1834* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1984).

100. Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 330; cf. HC 2:145.

101. HC 2:294 reports: “Bishop Whitney observed to Bishop Partridge that the thought had just occurred to his mind that perhaps in about one year from this time they might be seated together around a table on the land of Zion. . . . My heart responded, Amen. God grant it, I ask in the name of Jesus Christ.” Cf. Faulring, *American Prophet’s Record*, 42–43.

102. See HC 2:431, 432, 434; D&C 109:47, 51–52, 58; 105:9–13.

103. See HC 2:411, 418, 436.

104. Edmund Flagg, *The Far West; or, A Tour Beyond the Mountains*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1838), 2:111.

105. HC 2:434.

106. See *ibid.*, 1:472–73.

107. See James Collin Brewster, *Very important! To the Mormon money-diggers. Why do the Mormons rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?* (Springfield, IL, [1843]); *The Return* 1:105–106; Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, 19 Aug. 1836, in *The Saints’ Herald*, 1 Dec. 1879, 357. See also David R. Proper in *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 100 (April 1964): 93–97.

108. HC 2:466.

109. See Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 310; HC 3:3–5, 274.

110. David H. Pratt, ed., “Oh! Brother Joseph,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 27 (Winter 1987): 130.

111. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 163. For an account of the trial, see HC 2:150–60.

112. McKiernan and Launius, *Early Latter Day Saint History*, 127.

113. HC 2:144.

114. *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 1 (Oct. 1834): 16.

115. Concerning the change in this passage, Richard P. Howard has written: "Facing up to the cruel realities of the situation [in Missouri] through which the church had so recently passed, Joseph Smith stated essentially the same kind of judgment and promise but in more general and less vindictive language than he had used previously." See *Restoration Scriptures: A Study of Their Textual Development* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1969), 211.

116. HC 2:182.

117. For example, Oliver B. Huntington recorded in 1875: "On the 14th of Feb. 1835, Joseph Smith said that God had revealed to him that the coming of Christ would be within 56 years, which being added to 1835 shows that before 1891 and the 14th of Feb. the Savior of the world would make his appearance again upon the earth and the winding up scene take place. In connection with this event, [which] was related by my brother Dimick Huntington, the fact that when Joseph and Hyrum Smith submitted in their feelings to consent to give themselves up to the state mob at Nauvoo Illinois, after they had passed the Mississippi River. Joseph said 'if they shed my blood it shall shorten this work 10 years.' That taken from 1891 would reduce the time to 1881 which if true the time within which the Savior should come must be crowded into 6 years." See Oliver B. Huntington Journal, 2:129, typescript, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University Library.

118. Richard Anderson thus argues that Smith was cautious about setting an exact date for the Second Coming. However, Anderson fails to consider Mormonism's general millenarian shift after the failure of Zion's Camp. Richard Lloyd Anderson, "Joseph Smith and the Millenarian Time Table," *Brigham Young University Studies* 3 (Spring-Summer 1961): 55-66.

119. HC 2:180-200 records the organization of the twelve, but see *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 15 (March 1853): 206-207, for the deleted promises.

120. HC 5:336.

121. Lorenzo Barnes Journal, 2:51-52, LDS church archives.

122. HC 6:254. Cf. William Miller, *Evidence from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ about the Year 1843* (Boston, 1840). While Smith was unable to set a date for the Second Coming, he used his prophetic powers to denounce those who did.

123. Possibly referring to the revocation of the revelation in Doctrine and Covenants 84, Smith exclaimed, "A man would Command his son to dig potatoes, saddle his horse but before he had done either tell him to do sumthing els. This is all considered right. But as soon as the Lord gives a commandment & revokes that decree & commands something else then the prophet is considerd fallen &c." Wilford Woodruff Journal, 19 Dec. 1841, in Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 9 vols. (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983-85), 2:143. For a history of the plans for an Independence temple, see H. Michael Marquardt, "The Independence Temple of Zion," *Restoration* 5 (Oct. 1986): 13-17.

124. *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: F. D. Richards, 1855-86), 10:344, hereafter JD.

125. JD 13:138. See also Pratt's other statements 3:17; 13:138, 362; 17:111, 291-92.

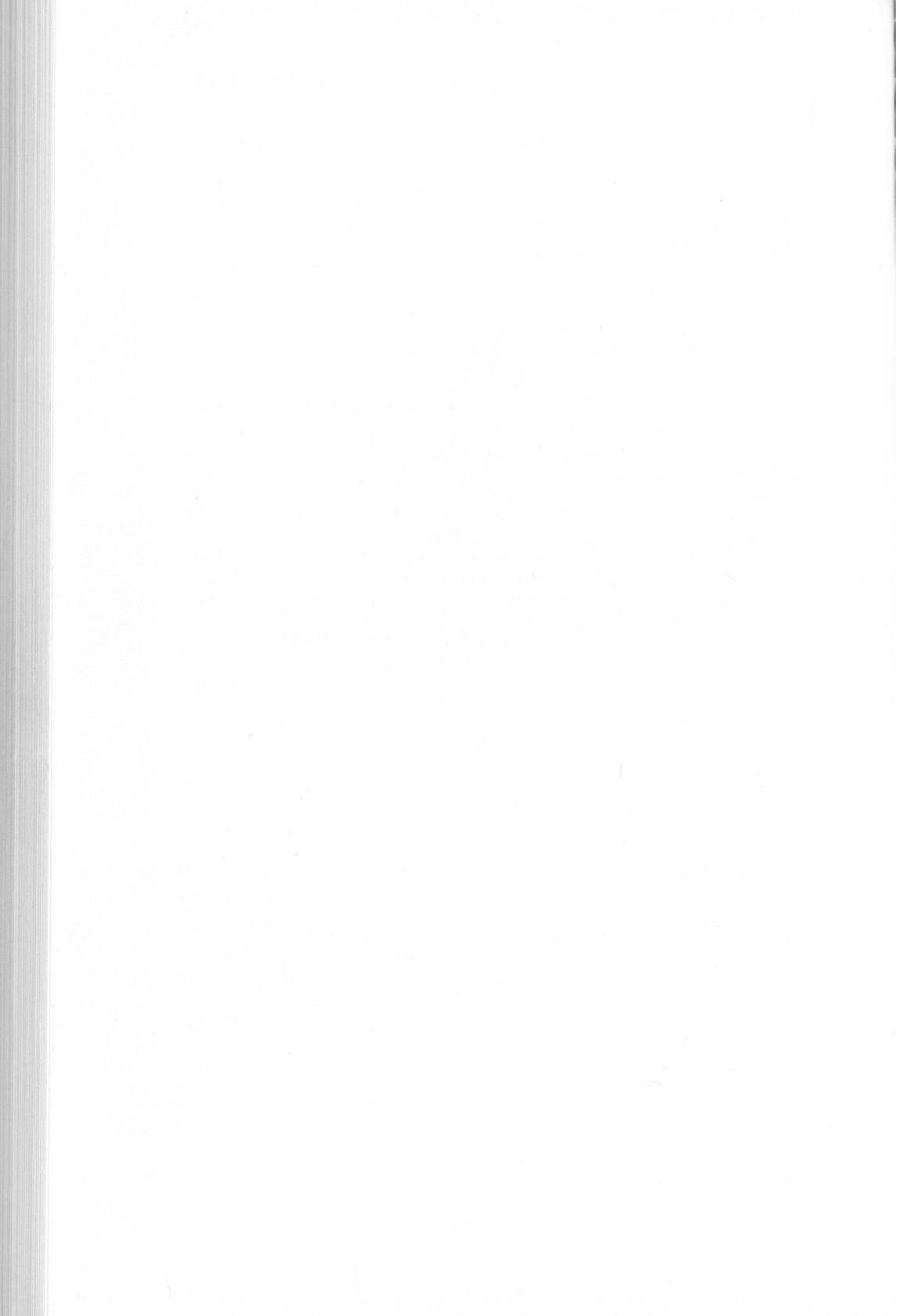
126. Kenney, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 6:71. See also Historian's Private Journal, kept by Wilford Woodruff, 22 Aug. 1862, 24, LDS church archives, where the same information is recorded; and *Times and Seasons* 6 (1 July 1845): 956.

127. Eugene E. Campbell, "Pioneers and Patriotism: Conflicting Loyalties," in *New Views of Mormon History: Essays in Honor of Leonard J. Arrington*, eds. Davis Bitton and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), 315.

128. The shift from the imminent advent of Jesus and impending destruction of the wicked to a delay of at least fifty years had an obvious dampening effect on the Saints' millennial enthusiasm. The adjustment was made by focusing on events expected to precede the Second Coming. See, for example, Joseph Smith's statement in HC 5:336-37.

129. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 11; cf. HC 3:390-91.

130. John G. Gager, "Early Mormonism and Early Christianity: Some Parallels and Their Consequences For the Study of New Religions," *Journal of Mormon History* 9 (1982): 56-57. See also Gager's *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975), esp. 37-49; L. Festinger, H. W. Riecken, and S. Schacter, *When Prophecy Fails* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956).



Conclusion

Joseph Smith's parents were both Christian primitivists, but with important differences. The death of Alvin Smith and the inception of the Palmyra revival brought these underlying differences into sharp contrast. Although his early attempts to communicate with God reveal Joseph's affinity with his father's Seekerism, Joseph was caught between his father and his mother's conservatism,¹ and the religious movement he subsequently founded often mediated between the two positions. The mediatory nature of Mormonism has usually been overlooked in the enthusiasm about its more radical elements. But as historian Marvin Hill has pointed out, the Book of Mormon is a mediatory work, "blurring distinctions and drawing together contradictory opinions. It had just the right approach for numerous New Englanders and New Yorkers who were tired of the acrimony of sectarian debate. The sacred volume stands half-way between a liberalism which flirts with disbelief (infidelity?), and a semi-orthodox Calvinism."²

William Mulder has argued that Mormonism was "not simply a colorful reflection of the times" but "a dynamic reworking of the diverse elements of American culture."³ According to Thomas O'Dea, Mormonism was a "combination of typicality and peculiarity." "Throughout its history, as in its very origin," argues O'Dea, "Mormonism was to be both typical of the larger American setting in which it existed and at the same time peculiarity itself, with its own special idiosyncratic emphasis and interpretations. Even when most at odds with its fellow Americans, it was to be typically American."⁴

Smith's attempt to mediate between opposing views is apparent. His early revelations demonstrated a moderate interpreta-

tion of spiritual gifts. They supported neither the extreme rationalism of the anti-revivalists nor the wild enthusiasm occasionally displayed in the camp meetings. The essence of the vision of a heaven with "three degrees of glory" was compromise, reconciling conflicting elements in Universalism and orthodoxy. Once, while commenting on the difference between the views of Presbyterians and Methodists concerning the doctrine of election, Smith said, "They are both wrong. Truth takes a road between them both."⁵ Although, the idea of continual revelation was radical, Smith's early revelations were conciliatory and often relatively moderate in content.

In fact, Smith's revelations conflicted with neither his father's early visionary dreams nor his mother's religious conservatism. His mother at first resisted her son's revelations and ignored his prophetic warning about the Presbyterians, but by the late 1820s she had become disillusioned with mainstream Christianity herself. Joseph's revelations were also becoming increasingly attractive to her, especially since they promised the Smiths a faith which would not betray their beloved Alvin.

Mormonism was able to mediate within the national context, as well. With the election of Andrew Jackson as president of the United States in 1828, the nation seemed committed to a more commercially oriented, pluralistic, competitive, individualistic, and secular society. Marvin Hill has persuasively argued that Mormonism was largely a conservative reaction against the increasingly liberalized environment of post-Revolutionary America.⁶ It was an attempt to return to the Puritan theocracy and community of New England and to realize the Puritan dream of a New Jerusalem in America. Thus some historians have preferred to look to the eastern seaboard rather than to the west for the origins of Mormonism.⁷ According to American historian David Brion Davis, "Mormonism was a link in the Puritan tradition, asserting a close and personal God, providential history, predestination, and ideal theocracy, the importance of a Christian calling, and a church of saints."⁸

Mormonism did not reject Jacksonian American culture altogether but reworked conflicting elements in the old and new orders. However, Mormonism was more syncretic than synthetic, never fully reconciling contradictory tenets and opposing organizational structures, but rather allowing extremes to balance each other.⁹ Syncretism is discernible in Smith's communitarian experiment where he departed from other American models by combining

elements of capitalism with common stock as well as his uneasy combination of theocracy and democracy ("common consent") in church government. The Book of Mormon's discussion of the Godhead and afterlife was never fully harmonized with later revelations. Mormonism, I believe, has been difficult to explain largely because of its syncretic nature and its failure to synthesize fully the competing elements it has drawn together.

Despite Mormonism's mediatory character, it was a radical, even revolutionary movement,¹⁰ and its theocracy seemed anachronistic, if not subversive, on the American frontier. The Disciples of Christ, on the other hand, attempted to adapt to the democratic impulses of the new republic. Since they did not expect a new dispensation of charismatic revelation and saw the Bible as the ultimate source of authority, they were able to assimilate democratic principles without strain. It was Mormonism's restoration of the charismatic apostleship which distinguished it from other Primitivists. Thus Mormonism was never simply "primitivism," as other studies have asserted. In addition, the suggestion that a "passage of primitivism" characterized the first decade of Mormonism overlooks the enormous influence of Seekerism.¹¹

In its embryonic stage Mormonism fulfilled radical Seeker expectations, with the restoration of charismatic authority and theocratic government. The later shift away from charisma did not preclude revelation and spiritual gifts but rather drew boundaries within which charisma was allowed. Charisma was institutionalized. Once the institution had been stabilized, then spiritual exercises such as the Kirtland temple endowment—which exemplified the evolving Mormon concept of authority by combining spiritual endowment and angelic endowment—could safely unfold and missionaries could be more confidently sent into the world to teach by the spirit. This effected, in the words of German sociologist Max Weber, the "routinization of charisma" and enabled the growth, stability, and endurance of Mormonism.¹²

Many of those who struggled against Smith within the Mormon movement were influenced by Seekerism to the point that they believed only in charismatic authority. The complaints of David Whitmer and William E. McLellin are illustrative in this regard. According to Whitmer, he at first reluctantly accepted the shift to a bureaucratized concept of priesthood bestowal but upon further reflection eventually concluded that Smith had departed from the ideals of the Book of Mormon and other early

revelations. Whitmer's and McLellin's claims that angelic ordinations were late additions to Mormonism are supported by considerable circumstantial evidence. The early emphasis on charisma, the lack of a clear priesthood restoration concept in the Book of Mormon and in the "Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ," the additions made to the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants concerning angelic ordinations, and statements of early leaders all demonstrate the shift to accommodate evolving notions of authority and governance. However, despite the reluctance of Whitmer and McLellin, the imprecision of the Seeker tradition regarding the restoration of authority allowed most others to make the adjustment without difficulty. Thus, I would argue, the shift in the Mormon concept of authority was consistent with most Seeker expectations.

In this treatment, I have not attempted a definitive explanation of Mormon origins, but rather an exploration of what early Mormonism represented to those drawn to its version of the gospel, many of whom had been influenced by Seekerism. In fact, Seekerism contributed more significantly to the early preoccupations and commitments of Mormonism than has previously been recognized. Whereas Mormonism may have been influenced by several movements and denominations, any examination of its theological and historical roots must consider Seeker beliefs to be complete.

— NOTES —

1. Marvin Hill has recognized the psychological aspect of Joseph Smith being caught between the religious positions of his father and mother. However, I disagree with Hill's assertion that Smith's first vision solved his dilemma. Neither the 1832 history nor the official 1838 history indicates that Smith received a commission in 1820 to establish the restored church. When he did establish an organization, it evolved from a Seekeristic church to a more conservative hierarchy—always retaining some elements of both. See Marvin S. Hill, "A Note on Joseph Smith's First Vision and Its Import in the Shaping of Early Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 12 (Spring 1979): 90–99.

2. Marvin S. Hill "The Role of Christian Primitivism in the Origin and Development of the Mormon Kingdom," Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1968, 101–102.

3. William Mulder, "The Mormons in American History," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 27 (Jan. 1959): 60.

4. Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 21.

5. Joseph Smith, Jr., et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1964), 6:252. Compare Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 330.

6. Hill, "Role of Christian Primitivism."

7. For those who have argued that we should look to the rural West for the social context of Mormonism, see Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950), 55-76; and Mario S. DePillis, "Social Sources of Mormonism," *Church History* 37 (March 1968): 50-79. For those who emphasize New England rather than New York in their discussions of early Mormon origins, see David Brion Davis, "The New England Origins of Mormonism," *New England Quarterly* 26 (June 1953): 147-68; Marvin S. Hill, "The Shaping of the Mormon Mind in New England and New York," *Brigham Young University Studies* 9 (Spring 1969): 351-72; Warren Jennings, "The City in the Garden: Social Conflict in Jackson County, Missouri," in *The Restoration Movement*, F. Mark McKiernan, Alma R. Blair, and Paul M. Edwards, eds. (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1973), 110-13, 117; Franklin Hamlin Littell, *From State Church to Pluralism: A Protestant Interpretation of Religion in American History* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1962), 83-89. My view is closest to that of Marvin S. Hill.

8. Davis, "New England Origins of Mormonism," 158.

9. The term "syncretism" in connection with Mormonism was suggested to me by D. Michael Quinn. On the use of syncretism in religious studies, see Mircea Eliade, et al., eds., *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 15 vols. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1987), 14:218-27; James Hastings, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 13 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908-26), 12:155-57; and Samuel Macauley Jackson et al., eds., *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 12 vols. (New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1908-12), 11:218-23.

10. Samuel S. Hill, Jr., "A Typology of American Restitutionism: From Frontier Revivalism and Mormonism to the Jesus Movement," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 54 (March 1976): 70.

11. Peter Crawley, "The Passage of Mormon Primitivism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 13 (Winter 1980): 26-37.

12. See Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, ed. Talcott Parsons (New York, 1947), 363-73; see also H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York, 1946), 262-64; S. N. Eisenstadt, *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building* (Chicago, 1968), xx-xxii. When RLDS scholar Robert Mesle described the transition in early Christianity from "ecclesia to institution"—that is, from a loosely structured church with a charismatic source of authority to a tightly structured church with clearly defined priesthood offices—he

noted a similar transition in early Mormonism. One reason for the transition in the early Christian church, Mesle argues, was for the control of charisma. See C. Robert Mesle, "The Restoration and History: New Testament Christianity," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19 (Summer 1986): 59-66.

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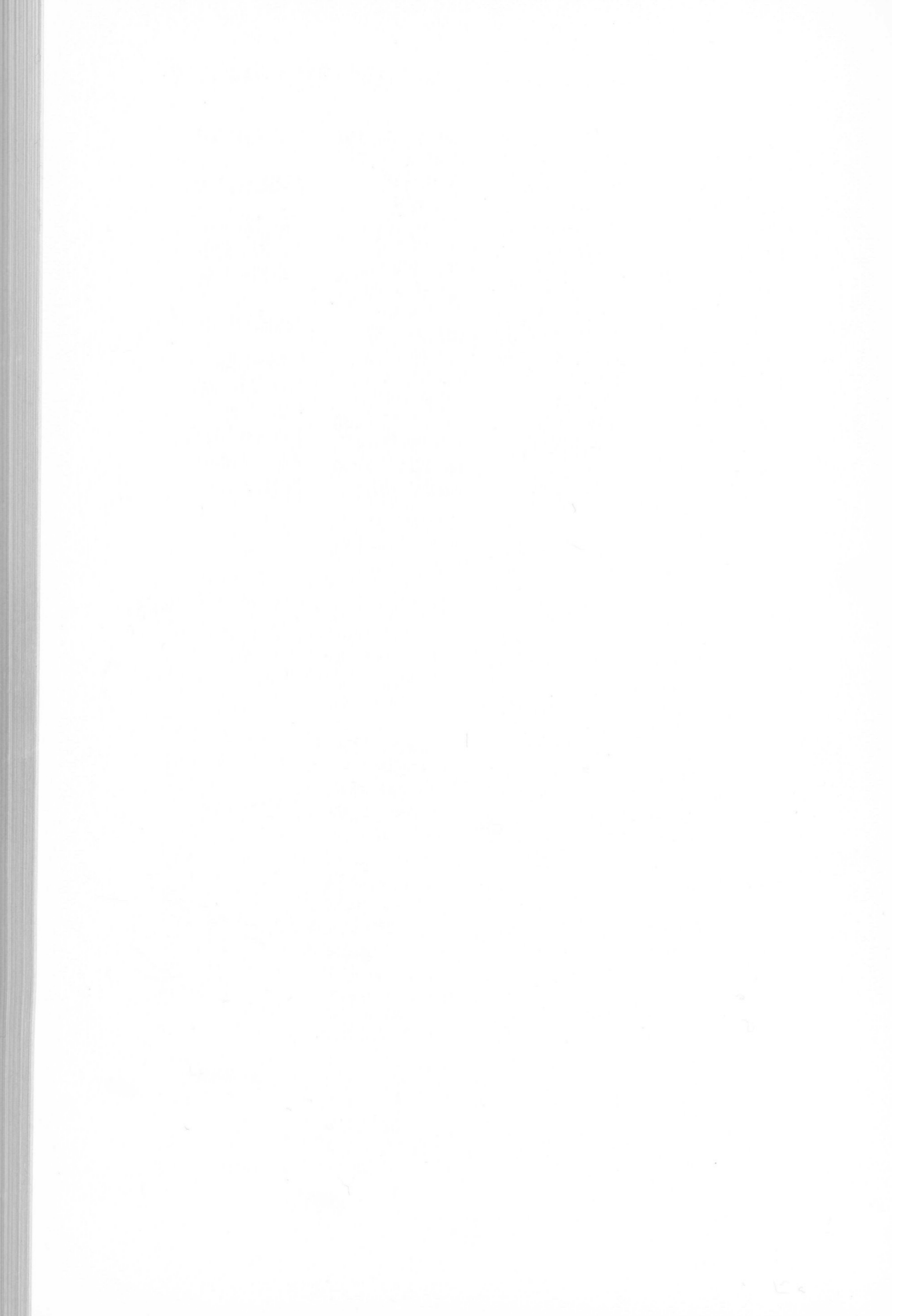
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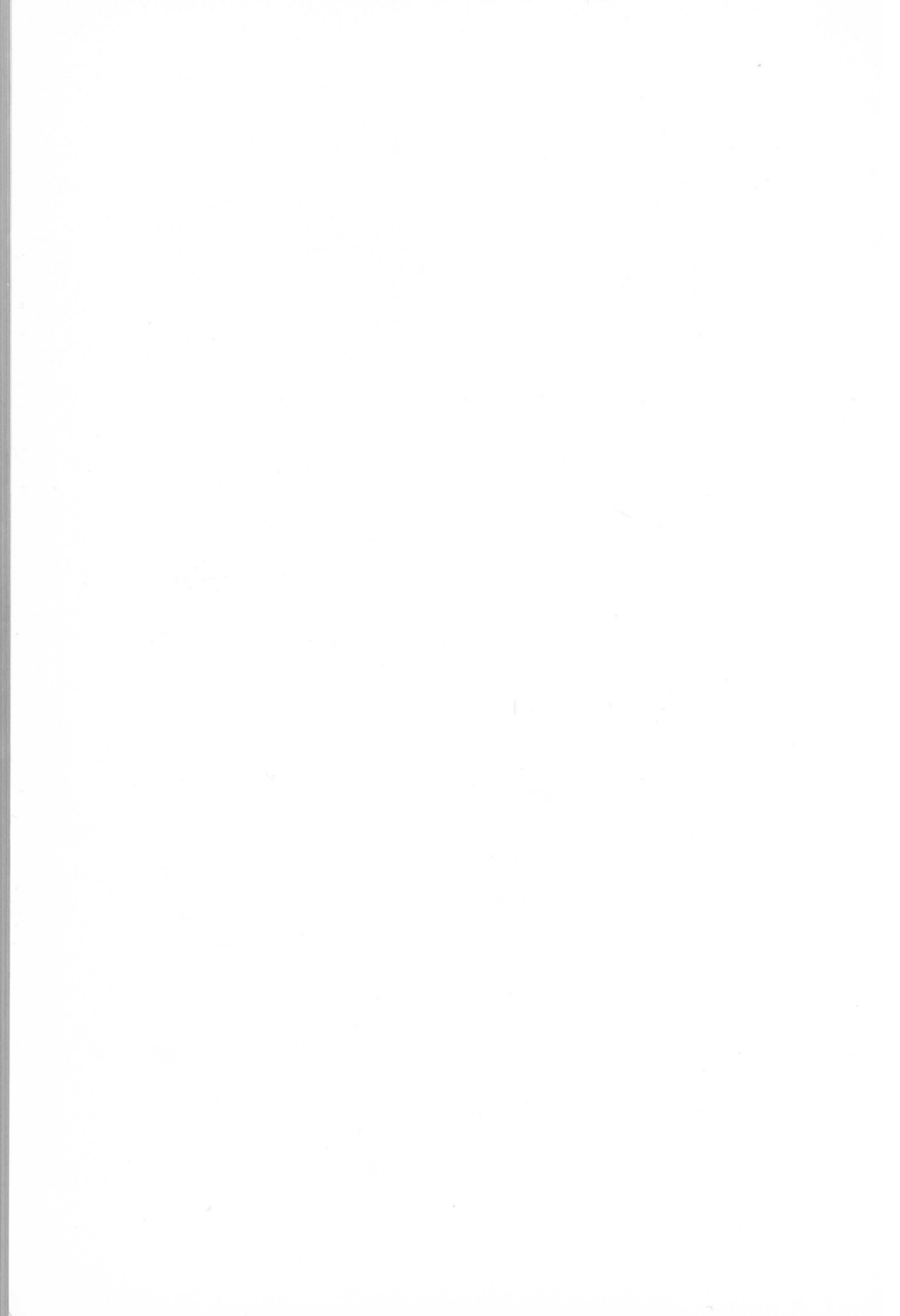
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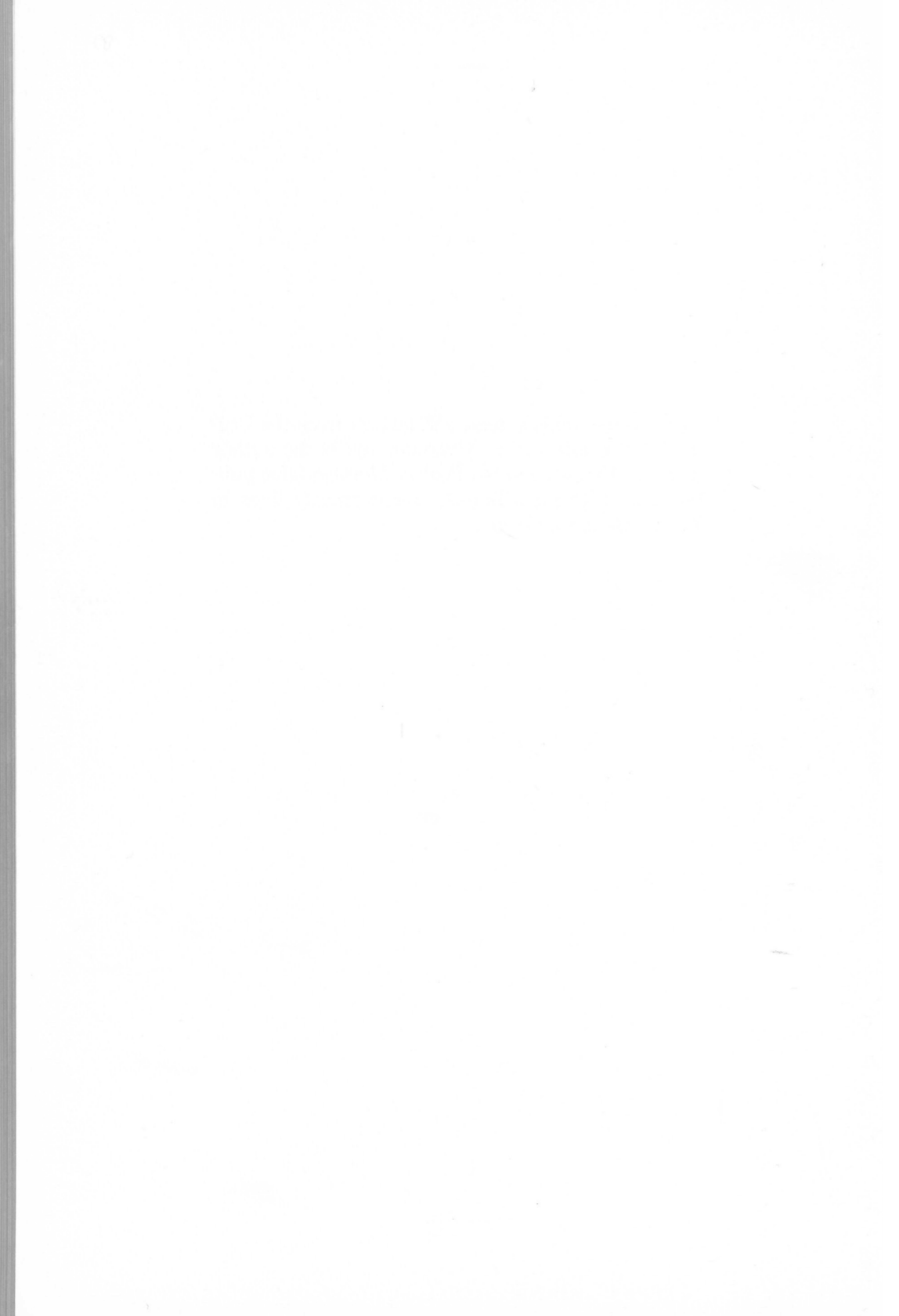
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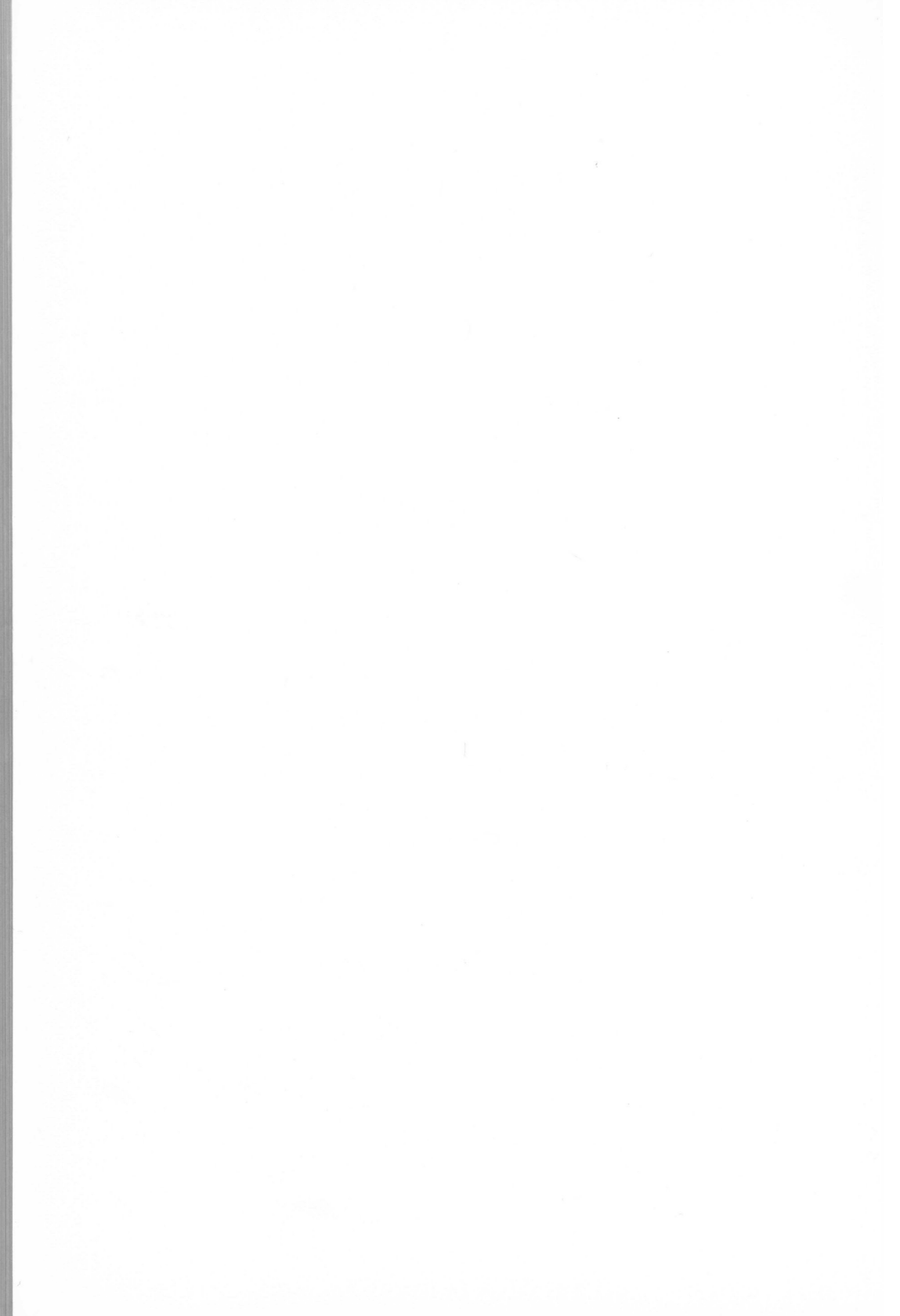
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Dan Vogel holds a degree in history from the University of California at Riverside and is the author of *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon* (also published by Signature Books). He currently lives in Westminster, California.





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